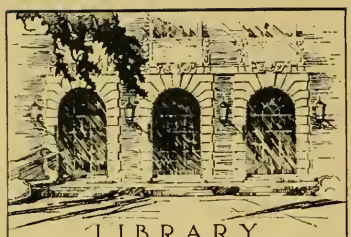

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A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF ST. DAVID'S,

BY

CONNOP THIRLWALL, D.D.

BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S,

AT HIS EIGHTH VISITATION,

OCTOBER, 1863.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY.

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A

CHARGE,

&c.

My Reverend Brethren,

In what might once be considered as ordinary times, passing events, of local or temporary interest, afforded but rare and scanty topics for a Bishop's charge: and it might often happen that it was entirely occupied with some general observations on the duties of the clergy, and with exhortations, which might be always edifying, but not more so at one time or place than another. The condition of the Church on the whole was apparently stationary; its movement, if any, too slow to be perceived by contemporary spectators. It was much if the universal stillness was now and then broken by an Act of Parliament, affecting some ecclesiastical interest, which might need explanation, or invite discussion, or by some abuse hurtful to the Church which appeared to call for the interposition of the

Legislature. Very different has been the state of things since I was charged with the administration of this diocese. During the whole of this period the Church has been more or less threatened from without, and agitated within. I need hardly remind you of the controversies which arose in the last generation, and have been carried on uninterruptedly to the present day, with regard to the Sacraments, and the whole range of theological questions connected with them. The gravity and practical importance of these disputes may be estimated, not only from the extent of the literature which has grown out of them, or from the heat with which opposite views have been maintained, but, partly, from the number of secessions from the Church, which have taken place in opposite directions, of persons who carried their views on either side to an extreme inconsistent with her formularies, and partly from the various efforts which have been made to obtain such a modification of those formularies, as may enable such of her ministers as are dissatisfied with them to feel themselves more at their ease within her pale.

It always seemed to me that such questions claimed a prominent, indeed the foremost, place among those which might be fitly treated on such an occasion as the solemn periodical meeting between a Bishop and his clergy; and that a survey of them taken from the point of view best suited to the character of the episcopal office, and in a spirit befitting the occasion, might serve a practical purpose; one, perhaps, more important

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than any which only concerns the temporal prospects of the Church. If, as was pretty sure to be the case, the result of a calm examination, conducted with a single eye to truth and charity, was to show that the theological differences which parted the contending schools had been greatly exaggerated by party zeal, and that there was ample room for both within the common pale, it might tend to allay some bitter feelings, to revive mutual confidence and good will, and to combine energies which would have wasted themselves in barren strife, for united efforts in the cause of Christ. And this is an object which, however far beyond the power of any one man to attain, is certainly worthy of all the pains that can be spent upon it.

Of late years the position of the Church, as an institution connected with the State, has undergone a change which is certainly of no light significance, though its ultimate consequences lie beyond the range of our view. The aggression of the party which aims at dissolving that connexion has been more systematically organized, and carried on with more concert and vigour than in former times. A society has been formed for the purpose of urging and guiding its movements, on every point where the Church seems most open to attack. By way of preparation for greater things, this society has been striving more especially to effect the abolition of church-rates, and in the mean while, as far as possible, to prevent them from being levied, even where they have been willingly granted; and to deprive the Church of her hold even on schools

endowed by members of her own communion, and most clearly designed by them to enjoy the benefit of her teaching. In these and other enterprises directed to the same object, the society has achieved but a very moderate degree of success, and has rather thwarted its own aims by a premature disclosure of its ulterior views. But this aggressive organization has called forth a counteractive movement of defence on the part of the Church, set on foot and conducted chiefly by laymen, which has already exerted a very wholesome influence, and promises to serve, not only for the protection of her legitimate interests, but for the extension and increased efficiency of her work.

But while on this side, though there are motives enough for constant watchfulness and redoubled activity, there has been no ground for alarm, it has befallen us to witness the upgrowth of questions within the Church, not only of a different kind, but of a different order, from those to which I was just now pointing, questions stretching very far toward the foundations of the Christian faith. How widely they are parted from those which had previously occupied the minds of churchmen may be gathered from several signs. While the interest roused by the previous controversies was confined to a comparatively narrow circle, and the points on which they turned were regarded by the bulk even of our own people rather as matters of ecclesiastical learning than of common practical concern,—except when they happened to be forced on public attention by some ill-judged introduction of

ritual innovations,—the recently promulged opinions have found their way among all classes of the community, and have been felt by all to involve very grave consequences; and, within the circle in which the earlier controversies were waged, the contending parties have suspended the old conflict to unite their forces against a movement which seems to threaten all that each holds most dear. Nor can any of those who stand outside the Church, and are even most hostile to many of her distinguishing doctrines and institutions, if they only hold her fundamental creed, look on this new struggle as unconcerned spectators. They are aware that they are no less interested in the issue.

When men have been startled by a new phenomenon, it is natural that they should inquire after its cause, and so attempts have not been wanting to trace the neology of our day to its source. Nor is this to be regarded as a question which can serve only to satisfy a vain curiosity. It has its practical use. For the nature of a thing can hardly be fully understood without some insight into its origin; and there can be no right judgment on its quality which is not grounded on a clear view of its nature. But the subject opens large room for conjectures, which it is equally hard to prove and to refute. One readily presented itself with much show of likelihood. It was natural to suppose that there was some connexion between the present and the immediate past; between the new opinions and the two great parties which had been so long striving for ascendancy in the Church. And to some it appeared

that the newly raised sceptical spirit was no more than the inevitable effect of a recoil which was sure to come, sooner or later, from the excess to which one of them had pushed its distinguishing tenets. When the claims of human authority have been advanced beyond their due limits, it would not be surprising that they should provoke a reaction, which is carried over bounds on the opposite side. This explanation might not be altogether groundless, and yet quite inadequate; and there may be as good reason for ascribing the result to a sequence rather than to a reaction, and for regarding the New as the offspring of the Old. For where the witness, either of the Church or of the individual consciousness, has been allowed practically to supersede that of Holy Writ, and has been treated as the supreme authority, the value of the historical record must more or less sink in comparison with both, and so may easily come to be positively disparaged. We know, in fact, that such was the effect of the opposite exaggerations of the Church of Rome on the one hand, and of the Reformation movement on the other. The Church of the Papacy has uniformly either forbidden or discouraged the reading of Scripture, as not only needless and useless, but dangerous for the mass of the laity. The place which she assigns to the Bible is subordinate to the living oracle of her visible Head. In her view the written Word borrows its whole title to belief from her sanction; and she would eagerly endorse the sentiment which has lately been expressed by a Bishop of our Church, that "if the whole Bible was removed,"

the Christian faith would still stand fast; that is, on that Rock on which she conceives it to have been founded by the Lord Himself, and which she sees in the succession of His earthly Vicegerents. Among the sects which sprang out of the Reformation, and marred and dishonoured it by their narrow and fierce fanaticism, there were several which, both in theory and practice, adopted the same sentiment, only in a widely different sense, subordinating the Record of Revelation to the manifestation of the light which shines in every man's breast, and bidding each seek truth from the dictates of his own inward oracle. Such a view is evidently no less adverse to the supremacy of Scripture than to the authority of the Church.

But yet, indisputable and worthy of note as is this ideal affinity between modes of thinking, which outwardly have so little in common, it would be unsafe to treat it as sufficient proof of a historical connexion; and I am unable to find any other. I am not aware of any more special grounds of a personal kind, which warrant such a supposition; and I do not believe that any discovery that could be made in this direction would repay the trouble of the search. The real state of the case seems to be disclosed plainly enough by the writings which have suggested the question. They exhibit opinions which had been long floating in the public mind; some as old as the earliest attacks on the Christian faith, revived in the last century by our own deistical writers, since then reproduced in various forms; in a few points perhaps of foreign origin, but

on the whole of native growth. No one who has reflected on the character and tendencies of modern European society, especially of our own, can be at any loss to account for the fact that such opinions should find easy, ready, even eager acceptance among many in our day. It is a natural consequence of the increased stimulus which has been given to physical studies, not only by the progress of discovery, and the craving for knowledge thus continually sharpened by that which feeds it, but by the wants and desires of our animal nature, to which it ministers, and which in our fast-growing population are constantly multiplying their demands with more clamorous importunity. I am only pointing to an unquestionable fact, without the remotest intention of disparaging the value and dignity of physical science, or the slightest wish that it should be less actively cultivated, or that its well-ascertained results should be less widely diffused, least of all in the belief that they are or can be in themselves adverse to religious truth; they may, nevertheless, by the excitement of too absorbing an interest, tend to create a disposition of mind generally unfavourable to its influence [1].

[1] Some remarkable words connected with this subject occur in a letter of Prince Metternich to A. v. Humboldt, which is printed in Humboldt's *Briefe an Varnhagen von Ense*, p. 219: "Le faux mène au faux, comme le vrai conduit au vrai. Aussi longtemps que l'esprit s'est maintenu dans le faux, dans la sphère la plus élevée que l'esprit de l'homme puisse atteindre, les conséquences de ce triste état ont dû réagir dans toutes les directions morales, intellectuelles, et sociales, et opposer à leur développement dans la

One thing is certain. It was not either the novelty of the opinions themselves, or the originality of the arguments by which they were maintained, that attracted public attention to the writings of which I am about to speak. The really new feature in the aspect which they there presented, was the character of the authors. It was just because the opinions were for the most part by no means new, but familiar to persons conversant with such subjects in the works of writers who, as holding such opinions, had deemed themselves, and been regarded by others, as hostile to

droite voie, un obstacle insurmontable. *La bonne nouvelle* une fois annoncée, la position a dû changer. Ce n'est pas en *divinisant les effets*, que ceux-ci ont pu être suivis dans les voies de la vérité ; leur recherche est restée circonscrite dans la spéculation abstraite des philosophes et dans la verve des poètes. *La cause* une fois mise à couvert, les cœurs se sont mis en repos et les esprits se sont ouverts. Ceux-ci sont longtemps encore restés enveloppés dans les brouillards de la sceptique païenne, quand enfin la philosophie scolastique a été débordée par la science expérimentale. Trouvez-vous mon raisonnement juste ? Si vous le trouvez, je ne suis pas en doute que vous ne partagiez ma crainte, que les progrès scientifiques véritables courent le risque d'être arrêtés par des esprits trop ambitieux, qui veulent remonter des effets à la cause, et qui trouvant la route coupée par les limites infranchissables que Dieu a posées à l'intelligence humaine, ne pouvant avancer, se replient sur eux-mêmes et retournent à la stupidité du paganisme en cherchant la cause dans les effets." The italics are Metternich's. Humboldt describes it as "einen sehr merkwürdigen Brief," "der halb theologisch endigt, voll Geist und Schwung der Rede, mit ein wenig Furcht vor dem Pantheismus." More exactly, it was a relapse into Paganism which Metternich thought he saw reason to apprehend, from a certain direction of scientific pursuits.

Christianity, that they produced so startling an effect when they were announced by ministers of Christ. For the writers did not belong to a religious body which, while claiming the name of Christian, repudiates all theological formularies, and imposes no restriction on its ministers, unless it be that they must not preach any very positive doctrine. They were ministers of a Church which aims at a definite teaching, and exacts conformity to that teaching from those whom she admits into her ministry. Nor were they among the obscure members of their order, whose personal character could add no weight to their opinions. They were all men of literary eminence, some filling very important places in the rearing of the rising generation. And if it might be supposed that scholastic pursuits, however favourable to deep research and comprehensive views, might deaden their sympathy with the feelings and needs of ordinary Christians, and might thus lead them to overlook some very important elements even of their own learned speculations, yet this could only be the case with some. There were others of the number who were engaged in pastoral duties, which brought them into daily contact with the practical problems of the Christian life. Such a combination of talents and opportunities might have been expected to yield two great advantages. On the one hand, a very clear consciousness, not only of the precise import of their statements, but of the perhaps remote, yet logically inevitable consequences which flow from them, so that, when such consequences were not de-

signed, the utmost care should be taken to guard the premisses from the appearance of involving them. And on the other hand, it was to have been hoped that there would have been shown, in the handling of religious subjects, however free, a certain tenderness for beliefs which, in the minds of common Christians, are intertwined with the holiest feelings of their hearts, and that, if it was necessary for the object in view to make a separation between them, it should be done so as to inflict the smallest possible amount of pain. One thing at least might have been thought to have been effectually secured, that no one in whom the characters of the academic teacher and the pastor of souls happened to meet, would, when treating such subjects, express himself so that an educated layman, called upon to give the closest attention to his words, should find it a difficult task to ascertain their meaning, and should be forced to "doubt whether, if the author had studied to express his sentiments with ambiguity, he could have been more successful[2]:" but above all, that no one, occupying that twofold position, would so far forget what was due to both, as to indulge in a tone of scornful bitterness against those of his brethren in the ministry who held a belief common to the vast majority of their own flocks, as well as of all Christians throughout the world, and in all ages of the Church[3].

[2] Dr. Lushington's Judgment in the case of the Bishop of Salisbury *v.* Williams, p. 18.

[3] On this point the judgment of the Edinburgh Reviewer (No. CCXXX., p. 479) will not be suspected of partiality: "The flip-

But even if these expectations had been fulfilled, there would have remained the very grave fact, that opinions generally thought contradictory to the principles of the Christian faith, were proclaimed in a work proceeding from eminent divines, ministers of the Church of England. Here, however, we cannot avoid noticing the peculiar form of the publication, as a collection of the independent contributions of different authors, writing wholly without concert with one another. It would indeed be unjust and absurd to represent them as having consciously co-operated with one another for any definite object, or as in any way antecedently pledged to one another's views; and the most entire credit was due to them, when they disclaimed such a joint responsibility and concert[4]. But

pant and contemptuous tone of the reviewer often amounts to a direct breach of the compact with which the volume opens, that the subjects therein touched should be handled 'in a becoming spirit.' Any thing more 'unbecoming' than some of Dr. Williams's remarks we never have read, in writings professing to be written seriously."

[4] This, however, may depend on the precise meaning of the word "concert." Mr. Kennard, who, writing the history of the book as a warm admirer and thorough-going advocate, is likely to have been well informed, states (*Essays and Reviews, their Origin, History, &c.*, p. 26): "They determined to vindicate for the clergy practically the right of treating openly, in language addressed to the people generally, questions concerning prophecy, miracles, &c. They associated at the same time a layman with them in the undertaking." It is so far from unusual to speak of persons who are "associated in an undertaking" as acting in "concert," that if, while conscious of the "association," they were to deny the "con-

at least this disclaimer, whether it was from the hand of one of their number, or from one who was authorized to speak in their name, must be considered as common to all. And what it clearly implied was, that, however each might reserve his private judgment as to any doctrine advanced by any of the rest, there was nothing in the whole that appeared to any of them inconsistent with that which, as clergymen of the Church of England, they were bound to maintain [5]. If the fact had been otherwise, there would have been a breach of "compact," of which those who dissented would have had a right to complain. Not only was no such complaint heard at the proper time, immediately after the publication, when it could not have been liable to misconstruction, but as far as silence was broken by any of them, it was in language signifying a more than contented acquiescence in every part of the whole teaching. And this was really the only point with which the Church had any concern. If the opinions, however questionable, did not go beyond the latitude allowed by her to her ministers, then their truth or falsehood was of little importance, except as it might

cert," they would hardly be thought to be making a perfectly fair use of language. But whether such a concert may be properly termed a "conspiracy" must depend on the nature of the object.

[5] Here the authority of the Ediuburgh Reviewer cannot be disputed: "Every one of them by lending his name to the book does beyond doubt assert that, however much he may differ from the views contained in any other Essay than his own, he yet vindicates the lawfulness of holding those views within the English Church." P. 489.

affect the reputation of the authors. But the question, whether these opinions were or were not consistent with her doctrines, was one on which depended something far more important than the reputation of any individual, however eminent in station, learning, and ability; that is, the character and position of the Church itself, as a branch of the universal Church of Christ. This was a question which interested every one of her members, the more deeply in proportion to the breadth of the doctrines propounded, and the closeness of their connexion with the foundations of the Christian faith. And to this extent it does appear to me that each of the clerical contributors did incur a responsibility, which he could not shift from himself, for opinions which he did not expressly disavow.

There was yet another point of view in which, notwithstanding the divided authorship, the book might be not improperly treated as if it had been the production of a single mind. Though consisting of a number of distinct essays on various subjects, it might exhibit a close affinity of thought and feeling, and strong indications of general unanimity among the writers. The different parts might appear to fit into one another, as if they had come from the same hand. There might be every where signs of a common drift and tendency, just as if all had been arranged with a view to one object: and a total absence, not only of any express contradiction, but of any thing to suggest the suspicion of a divergency of views, among the contributors. How far it presents the appearance of

such harmony, must depend on the judgment we may form of its contents[6]. But before I proceed to consider what appears to me most important and characteristic in them, I think it may not be useless to make a few remarks on the public history of the book. Its private history will probably long remain a secret confined to a few.

It was not until the work had passed through several editions, and had attained a celebrity which far exceeded the hopes of the authors, and perhaps even the wishes of some among them, and not until it had experienced a great amount of adverse criticism, which called forth neither defence nor explanation, that the attention of the episcopate was formally drawn to it by a memorial signed by a large body of the clergy. This step has been treated as a pitiable mistake on the part of the memorialists. But the conduct of the Bishops, who concurred in a general censure of the work, was visited with still severer condemnation. They were charged with abusing their position, to encourage a foolish and groundless outcry, and aggravate a senseless panic, and with attempting to stifle inquiry, and to restrain the rightful freedom of the clergy[7]. It was thought by some that they were not at liberty to express an opinion on the work, unless they at the same time entered into a discussion of its

[6] If indeed Mr. Kennard's statement, cited in a previous note, is well founded, there would be no need of an appeal to internal evidence on this head.

[7] Edinburgh Review u. s. and Mr. Kennard *passim*.

contents, and distinguished the various degrees in which their censure applied to the several contributors [8]. To some it appeared deplorable that they should censure the opinions of others, without at the same time avowing their own continued adherence to the doctrines of the Church [9]. But perhaps no complaint was more popular and oftener repeated, than that they had not refuted before they condemned.

It is evident that the justice of all these complaints must depend on the character of the work, and that each contains a tacit assumption which may be well or ill founded. It is on this account only that I now advert to them. If the questions raised in the work were of trifling moment, though through some unfortunate accident they had produced much temporary excitement, then it would have been the duty of the chief pastors of the Church to exert their influence for the purpose of allaying that excitement, and to enlighten those who had been blindly agitated by an imaginary danger. If again the opinions expressed in the work kept within the latitude which might be rightfully claimed by ministers of our Church, then,

[8] Edinburgh Review, p. 469.

[9] Tracts for Priests and People. *Religio Laici*, p. 9. If the excellent author had spoken much more hardly of the bishops and clergymen whose conduct toward the writers of the Essays and Reviews he laments, they would be amply consoled, on finding that the most unfavourable view which any of them has taken of the work, is just that which he supposes it must present to "young men of all ranks;" in other words, to every unprejudiced and unsophisticated mind.

however they might be opposed to those both of a great majority of the clergy, and of the whole episcopate, it would have been unfair to condemn them as repugnant to the doctrines of the Church, or inconsistent with the obligations of her ministers. But if such a repugnance did exist, then to require that, before any censure was pronounced, the opinions condemned should be disproved, would clearly involve consequences which can hardly have been generally contemplated by those who called for a previous refutation. By *refutation* they must have meant something more than an argument which, however strong in the judgment of the party which employs it, leaves the opponent unconvinced: and, if he is to be the judge of its cogency, it would follow that any minister of the Church may deny every one of her doctrines, and yet be allowed to remain in her ministry until he admits his error. It seems indeed as if there were persons who saw no absurdity in this extent of licence, or would only restrict it in the actual performance of sacred functions. But unless this be allowed, it is evident that in the case we are now considering, the question whether the doctrine propounded is true or false, though undoubtedly first in importance, is not that which has to be first discussed with a view to any practical result. For in general such a discussion would be only a renewal of an old and endless controversy. In the order of time the first question must be, whether the doctrine is in harmony with the teaching of the Church. This, which is the point of imme-

diately practical concern, is also that which may in general be most easily ascertained.

This was the sum and substance of the censure pronounced on the book. It was a declaration that, in the opinion of the Bishops, its contents *were* repugnant to the doctrine of the Church. It has been made matter of complaint that this censure was expressed in terms which were likely to inflict needless pain on the authors; and it has been invidiously described as demanding the removal of five of the number from their positions in the Church [1]. It was even thought that, if the work had been less severely condemned, some of them might have felt themselves at liberty to declare their dissent from the extreme opinions avowed by others; but that, after so many voices had been raised against them, especially from the high places of the Church, a sense of honour prevented them from entering into any explanations, that might indicate a disapproval of any portion of the book. I have already pointed out, that there was an earlier occasion, when this might have been done without any risk of misconstruction. And highly as we may respect such a point of honour, we may doubt whether in this case it was consistent with a higher law of duty, and the dictates of Christian charity; and whether the more

[1] Edinburgh Review u. s., p. 469. Farther on, in the warmth of his peroration, the Reviewer does not scruple to charge the Bishops with the "design of terrifying or driving out of the Church those whom they themselves confess to be among its chief ornaments."

sacred obligation was that which they owed to a few persons with whom they had become accidentally associated in a literary undertaking, or that under which they lay toward the great body of their brethren and the Church at large. But as to the language of the censure, whatever pains might have been taken to soften it, it could not without dissimulation have left any uncertainty on the main point: that clergymen had published doctrines opposed to those of their Church, and this not on any nice and doubtful questions, in which much subtlety was needed to discern the line which separates orthodoxy from error[2], but on such as lay at the root of all revealed religion.

[2] The main drift of the apology in the Edinburgh Review is to show that the public had been entirely mistaken in its notion of the work, and that, with a possible immaterial exception or two, it had only freely handled questions on which a great latitude of opinion had always been allowed, and exercised by many eminent divines of our Church. This afforded the Reviewer the additional advantage of enabling him, while defending his friends, to retaliate on some of those who had joined in the censure, as having "published opinions exactly coinciding with those which they condemned;" and as thus aggravating the offence of an unjust persecution by a shameful inconsistency. The justice of this charge depended on the assumption, that the censure which they had pronounced on the book was levelled at those opinions. This however was a mere surmise, which would have been purely arbitrary, even if it had happened not to be, as it was, certainly unfounded; and it is not easy to reconcile it with the Reviewer's own complaint, that the censure "abstained from all distinct specifications of offence." He himself owns that, according to the sense in which it has been almost universally understood, one of the Essays appears to him "to have transcended the limits of

It is worthy of note, that the call for refutation was raised by those who also most strongly deprecated any resort to judicial proceedings against the persons who were charged with unsound doctrine. In this I think they were quite consistent. If a minister of the Church has a moral right, while he continues to exercise his ministry, to impugn her most fundamental doctrines, until he has been convinced of their truth, it would be unjust to invoke the aid of the law to convict him of that which would then be a mere technical offence. But it seems to me not quite so consistent, that the persons who called for refutation,

devout belief." He does not indeed say, but much less does he deny, that what transcends those limits must also overstep the range of legitimate freedom within the pale of the English Church. Yet, on his own construction of the joint disclaimer, all the other Essayists meant to "vindicate the lawfulness of holding those views within the English Church;" or at least have contentedly allowed the world to believe that they do so. The other admitted exceptions are represented as trifling, because contained in "a few words." Yet four monosyllables have sufficed for an important proposition, which it would be difficult to bring within the limits of devout belief (Ps. liii. 1). In substance, the Reviewer perfectly agrees with the "Episcopal Manifesto," which he brands as "the counterpart of the Papal excommunication levelled against Italian freedom." The chief difference is, that the admissions of an advocate are the most conclusive evidence, and the censure of a friend the most likely to be fully deserved, though as mild in form as the nature of the case will permit.

It is only a noble and generous spirit that will ever make too great a sacrifice to friendship; yet that is too great which is made at the cost of justice. A moralist who enjoyed a high reputation even before he was thought to be inspired, laid down the rule: *nulla est excusatio peccati, si amici causa peccaveris.*

should also have condemned the proceedings which were instituted in Convocation for the purpose of determining the theological character of the book. But those who were most strongly convinced that this character was essentially at variance with the fundamental teaching of the Church, might be most inclined to doubt whether that question could be fairly tried in a Court of Justice. And experience has shown how ill the forms of penal judicature are adapted to that end, and this just on account of what constitutes their highest excellence. In a criminal prosecution, it is the duty of the judge to require the most rigorous proof of the charge: to interpret ambiguous language in the sense most favourable to the writer: to refuse to listen to any accusation of merely constructive heresy: to shut his eyes to the spirit and tendency of a work, however apparent, unless they are embodied in some distinct and tangible proposition. I can never lament that rules based on the first principles of right should have been strictly observed, though the effect might seem in some instances a failure of substantial justice. I cannot regard it as an unmitigated evil, that the decision of questions involving abstruse points of Divinity, should be committed to a layman, with no guide but his natural good sense for the interpretation of language, the full import and bearing of which could be correctly appreciated by none but an expert theologian. When civil rights are at stake, there can hardly be too great a jealousy of

professional bias or learned refinements. It may happen that one man suffers a severe penalty through his incapacity clearly to express a right meaning, while another escapes through the studied ambiguity with which he insinuates a wrong one. The former may be the greater evil of the two; but neither could lead me to desire a change by which the trial of a criminal prosecution for matters of religious opinion, should be taken out of lay hands.

Happily, just on this account, the character of the Church as a religious communion can never be compromised by such a decision, and it is only through a vulgar error, or a disingenuous polemical artifice, that it can be treated as having that effect. No judgment pronounced under such circumstances can afford a measure of the quality of a theological work, so as either to preclude the right, or to dispense with the need of examining it from a different point of view for the purpose of estimating its orthodoxy. The distinction between a judgment pronounced on a work in its purely theological aspect, and one delivered by a judge before whom the author is prosecuted for heresy, may appear somewhat subtle and difficult to grasp. But unless it be admitted, and in the sense, that the same person might consistently, when exercising the functions of a Judge, acquit that which he had condemned as a Divine, we should be driven to a conclusion revolting to common sense. For it would follow that, on the appearance of a work in which a clergyman broached unsound doctrine which

might expose him to legal penalties, a Bishop, who lies under a special obligation to guard the purity of the Church's doctrine, would be the one person in his diocese who would have no right, even when consulted by those who are entitled to his advice and guidance, to express an unfavourable opinion of the work, because he might afterwards be called upon to sit in judgment on the author.

We may venture to believe that no very strong sensation would have been excited in the public mind by a layman who in our day should have revived the speculations of Spinoza and Hume on the absolute impossibility, or the incredibility of miracles. They would have been felt to belong to a metaphysical system, so wholly foreign to the principles of the Church, as to render it needless for Churchmen to protest against it, and quite allowable for them to decline a controversy where the disputants had scarcely any common ground to stand on. But just for this reason the reproduction of these opinions in the work of a clergyman, could hardly fail to excite general surprise; and it is only a little less surprising that the fact should appear to any one so natural, and so manifestly consistent with the author's profession, as to make it absurd to attach any importance to it, and wrong to treat it as, with respect to his ecclesiastical position, worthy of censure. When we think for a moment of the Evangelical History, and of the Creeds, to say nothing of the Liturgy, we rather find it difficult to argue the

incongruity of such views with the teaching of our Church, for the opposite reason: because the proving of a point so evident, would be a waste of words. And this difficulty is increased when we find that the writer, in whose view the study of the "evidences of Christianity" must lead every duly cultivated mind to reject the belief in supernatural interposition, appears altogether to ignore the existence of any but secondary, or—as they are sometimes termed by an unfair assumption,—natural causes in the world. He admits indeed that the "broader views of physical truth, and universal order in nature," which are now increasingly prevalent, "point to the acknowledgment of an overruling and all-pervading supreme intelligence [3]." But this language would at least as aptly express the fundamental doctrine of Spinoza, as that of any theist; especially when coupled with th statements, that "creation is only another name for our ignorance of the means of production [4]," and that "the Divine Omnipotence is entirely an inference from the language of the Bible [5]:" and the argument employed to prove the impossibility of miraculous interposition, moves wholly within the circle of a purely materialistic philosophy. It would however be unfair to overlook, that the author sometimes expresses himself as if his standing-place was still in some sense Christian ground, and as if in his own judgment he was only doing his best to carry

[3] P. 126. [4] P. 139. [5] P. 113.

out the common object of the Volume, by rescuing the subject which he handles from the danger of "suffering by the repetition of conventional language, and by traditional methods of treatment." He distinguishes between the provinces of reason or science and of faith, as if both had a real existence, though governed by different laws, and might flourish peacefully side by side, if only their respective limits had not been confounded by ill-judged attempts at mutual encroachment. It may thus have appeared to him, that he was filling the part of a peacemaker, and laying down the conditions of a lasting reconciliation, between parties which had been separated through an unhappy misunderstanding. We would fain believe that such was the aim with which he undertook his last work, and may hope that he himself derived comfort from the faith which he still recognized as surviving the evidences which it was the object of his argument to overthrow.

But our wishes and hopes cannot alter the nature of things, and charity does not require or even permit us to shut our eyes to the truth. The distinction between the dominion of physical science and of faith, which qualifies the merely negative and destructive character of the general conclusion, is indeed a question of the gravest moment, and of an interest quite independent of any temporary controversy. If it be true that faith may find all that she needs, to satisfy her highest aspirations, within her own sphere, and that she is there secure and inaccessible to the inroads of physical

science, which neither seeks nor is able to invade her sanctuary, why should she not be content with the undisturbed enjoyment of her proper and undisputed domain? That is the position on which the author takes his stand, and in which he may have won the sympathy of many who totally dissent from the negative side of his doctrine. That there is such a life of faith, conversant with purely spiritual truths, abstracted from all conditions of time and sense, could not be denied without rejecting the experience of the holiest men in all ages. We must go farther and say, that it is only with such truths that faith is ever properly conversant. Historical facts are the object of a historical belief, which Scripture itself teaches us to distinguish from that faith which it describes as the indispensable condition of salvation [6]. I am sure that there is no error against which you, my Reverend Brethren, would more earnestly warn your hearers, than the confounding of this distinction. And certainly such a faith has no injury to dread from the progress of physical science. The region in which it lives and moves is wholly spiritual and supramundane: one in which a science, which deals only with the laws of matter, can find no footing, and therefore must needs leave it in peace.

But then we must consider what is the price which, on the author's terms, has to be paid for this security; the condition on which faith is permitted to remain

[6] James ii. 19.

thus unmolested. It is that she shall not attempt to cross the border of her own province, and claim a standing-ground in the world of nature; in other words, that she shall hold no doctrine which involves the supposition of a supernatural interruption in the predetermined sequence of physical phenomena. She must not only forego, but renounce the belief in any such event. "Miraculous narratives" may "become invested with the character of articles of faith;" but it is on condition that they be "accepted," not as records of historical facts, but "in a less positive and certain light, or perhaps as involving more or less of the parabolic or mythic character[7]." This restriction excludes, not only outward supernatural events, but also every fact of inward experience which cannot be explained, on psychological grounds, as a phase of a merely human development. A direct communication of Divine grace would be as much a breach of continuity in the order of causation as any visible miracle, and might as well be described as only "another name for our ignorance of the mode of production." It is indeed "confessed" "that, beyond the domain of physical causation and the possible conceptions of intellect or knowledge, there lies open the boundless region of spiritual things which is the sole dominion of faith[8]." But this description seems to show that there are two insurmountable obstacles to any communication between this region and the material universe in which

[7] P. 142.

[8] P. 127.

we live. The things which belong to this spiritual region "lie beyond the possible conceptions of intellect or knowledge," and even if they could be grasped by our faculties in our present state of being, as they are extrinsic to the domain of physical causation, there is no mode by which they could be conveyed to our minds, but a supernatural intervention, which is rejected by "intellect and philosophy," as "inconsistent with the universal order and indissoluble unity of physical causes." It would be at once a miraculous enlargement of human capacity, and the introduction of a new element into the series of historical events, not linked by a natural dependence with those which preceded it. We readily admit, or rather, as Christians, we earnestly maintain the possibility of a direct communication between the Father of spirits and the soul of man. But whatever is so imparted to man is an object, not of simple faith, but of knowledge; and since the recipient of such a communication is not a disembodied spirit, but one dwelling in a human frame, and so united with it, that every successive idea and emotion involves a corresponding change in the bodily organization, it is clear that a Divine inward revelation is as much a miracle, and therefore, according to the Essayist's view, as truly impossible as any related in the Bible.

And so it appears in what sense we are to understand the admission, which is held out as a compensation for so much that is denied. The "dominion" assigned to faith may be filled with the most sublime

and satisfying spiritual realities. But since for man in his present state there is no avenue through which he can receive any certain information concerning it, it must for him remain, as long as that state lasts, a region unknown and unknowable. Its realities are not such to him. To him it is either a mere void, or peopled only with phantoms, the creatures of his imagination, the reflex it may be of his earthly experience, indefinitely enlarged and beautified. It may be the object of a deep yearning, as a better country, a future home; but in no other sense can it properly be called the "dominion" of faith.

There may, however, be danger of misunderstanding in the use of such figurative expressions. And it is to be regretted that the language employed by the author in his positive statements is much less clear and precise than that of his negative propositions. His reasoning against the possibility of miracles, if indeed it consists of any thing more than naked assertions, will be more or less convincing according to the state of mind to which it is addressed; but it leaves no room for doubt as to its meaning[9]. On the other hand, his description of the proper province and objects of faith is so vague and ambiguous, that it is hard to believe he can himself have formed any distinct notion of the sense in which it is to be understood. "An alleged miracle

[9] As this has been questioned, and the question involves some points of great importance, I have considered it in a note, which will be found at the end of the Charge.

can only be regarded in one of two ways: either abstractedly, as a physical event,—and therefore to be investigated by reason and physical evidence, and referred to physical causes,—or as connected with religious doctrine, regarded in a sacred light, asserted on the authority of inspiration." In the latter case, "it ceases to be capable of investigation by reason, or to own its dominion. It is accepted on religious grounds, and can appeal only to the principle and influence of faith [1]." "The *miracles* are merged in the *doctrines* with which they are connected, and associated with the declarations of spiritual things, which are, as such, exempt from those criticisms to which physical statements would be necessarily amenable [2]." But an "alleged miracle" is not the less a physical event because connected with religious doctrine. It cannot on that account be less capable of investigation by reason. If it is "accepted on religious grounds," it is accepted *as* a physical event, and only by those who do not admit that as such it is incredible. It is not the more exempt from the criticisms of those who have adopted that principle, though it may have a stronger claim on their forbearance. So long, indeed, as we confine ourselves to abstractions, such language may not appear to involve any contradiction or absurdity. It assumes that there is no real, but only an imaginary connexion, between the miracle and the doctrine; so that the doctrine may be retained, while the miracle is rejected.

[1] P. 142. [2] P. 143.

But the religion to which the whole argument is meant to apply, is one in which the fundamental article of faith, according to the belief of the Church of England, is itself a physical event, a historical fact, and, if true, is supernatural. The fact and the doctrine are inseparably blended together. To deny the fact is to reject the doctrine. It is indeed possible to make away with the doctrine, and in its room to substitute one which should not involve a departure from the order of nature. What that doctrine should be, would indeed have to be left to every one's private judgment. It might be some moral truth; it might be some philosophical speculation. It might be "exempt from the criticisms to which physical statements are amenable." But it would not be a mystery; it would not be a point of faith; it would have no need to be held "sacred from examination," and "shielded within the pale of the sanctuary." Making no pretension to sanctity, it would claim neither reverence nor indulgence, but would simply assert its right as a matter of private opinion.

A different question arises as to the miracles which were simply manifestations of the divine character of the Founder of our religion. They are not indeed, when considered each by itself, so intimately connected with its fundamental truths; there is no one of them, except the Resurrection, so identified with any article of faith, that if it had never been wrought, or had never been recorded, it would have made any difference in our creed. But it could only be through a

strange thoughtlessness that any one could maintain, that the Christian faith would be no way affected, though all should be rejected as matters of fact, and received only as "parables or myths." When the miraculous portions of the Gospel history are expunged, there will remain only a meagre outline of our Lord's life, ending with His death. Discourses indeed, attributed to Him, will be left, full of wisdom and holiness. But of the speaker Himself, His character and work, it will be impossible, from sources so utterly corrupt as, on this supposition, those to which alone we have access, would be, to gain any distinct image. All that would be known of Him with any approach to certainty, would be, that having appeared as a teacher, and gathered disciples around Him, He had provoked the enmity of the Jewish rulers, and been put to death. All beyond this would be involved in obscurity, and would only afford occasion for doubtful conjectures. When the most original and trustworthy accounts of His life had been so disfigured by fiction, no reliance could be placed on reports contained in them, of any declarations which He had made concerning Himself.

But the loss of all information which would enable us to set Him before our eyes, not as a mere abstraction, but as a real living person, would be far from the most painful consequence which would flow from this rejection of all that purports to be miraculous in the history of His life. For even as fiction, it must have had some adequate cause or occasion; and it would be

hard to believe, that such a mass of miraculous legends should have gathered round one who had never made any pretence to supernatural powers; and that works which He never attempted or professed to perform, should have been represented as one main part of the business of His ministry, and as that to which He constantly appealed as evidence of His divine mission [3]. I need not observe how dark a shade the alternative supposition must cast even on the purity of His human character, to which, nevertheless, those who would divest Him of all titles to any higher ground of reverence, are used to point, as a compensation for the divine attributes which they withhold from Him [4].

But here I feel myself bound to observe,—and it is a point which in the heat of controversy we are all too apt to overlook,—that although these inferences appear to me to follow unavoidably from the author's premisses; though in my judgment he has entirely failed to reconcile his scientific theory with the elementary truths of the Christian faith; still, that which has been pointed out is no more than an inference: one which the author himself has not expressly drawn, but on the contrary has earnestly striven to avoid: one

[3] Matt. xi. 4 foll. and 20 foll. John xiv. 11. This is of course quite independent of the question as to the value of the element of power in the miracles.

[4] As even M. Renan has not been prevented by his admiration for his "noble initiateur," from reviving Woolston's worst outrage, and representing our Lord as abetting Lazarus and his family in a deliberate imposture.

therefore with which personally he could not be fairly charged. We may not only fain hope, but reasonably believe, that many at this day who are perplexed with like intellectual difficulties, are nevertheless enabled to hold fast the foundation of a true and living faith, perhaps more firmly than some who have never undergone the like trial. However unintelligible to us may be the process by which they are enabled to combine views, which we can only regard as radically inconsistent with one another, this is no reason for denying its existence, as a fact of the individual's consciousness, which may be to him not the less satisfactory because he is unable to explain it clearly to others, or even, it may be, distinctly to understand it himself. The student of nature, who, without surrendering one particle of physical truth, or admitting any restriction on the freedom of scientific investigation, is yet able to withstand the most dangerous temptation which besets his favourite pursuits—the tendency to a mechanical philosophy, or the resting in second causes—and who, resigning himself to the consciousness of his limited faculties and imperfect knowledge, clings to the centre of his spiritual being, and finds a secure anchorage in the love of his heavenly Father, as revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ,—such a one exhibits one of the noblest examples of Christian humility, wisdom, and self-control, that in these days it is possible to witness.

But useful as these considerations may be to guard us against rash judgments with regard to persons, they cannot alter the plain sense of words, or the character

of propositions, or empty them of the inferences logically involved in them. Every one is at liberty to disown conclusions which flow unavoidably from his premisses; and we may often rejoice in this inconsistency, where we believe it to be sincere; but it can neither break the tie which knits the premisses to the conclusion, nor prevent others from perceiving that connexion, and so feeling themselves constrained either to adopt or to reject both. What must become of Christianity after its supernatural groundwork has been withdrawn from under it, I do not now inquire. But to maintain that the fundamental doctrines of the Church of England can survive that displacement, is a paradox which no ingenuity can reconcile with common sense.

It has been said[5], and, as I am quite willing to believe, with justice, that "the object of the writers was not to create, but to remove difficulties in the way of the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus;" "to place Christianity beyond the reach of accidents whether of science or criticism." But the excellence of the end could not relieve them from all responsibility in the choice of means; and the whole question is whether the means adopted are such as can be reconciled with their relations to the Church. No doubt, when the supernatural origin of Christianity is abandoned, it will be effectually secured from many assaults; for as against the larger part of its adver-

[5] By Mr. Kennard, u. s. p. 134.

saries there will remain nothing to defend. When that point is once conceded to them, they in their turn will be liberal enough on every other. As they do not deny the existence of the Christian religion, or of a body calling itself the Church of Christ, they will mostly be very tolerant of any other mode of accounting for the historical fact. They will not be averse from the theory, that it entered into the designs of Providence, as an instrument for the education of the world. Viewing it in that light, they may not even scruple to speak of it as divine; for they will admit that it has as much right to that epithet as any other event in the history of mankind. They will not begrudge the praise due to its beneficent influence on the progress of civilization; and there are hardly any terms which some of them would find too strong to express their respect and admiration for the character, whether real or ideal, of its Founder. Rousseau and Strauss have been eloquent on this theme. But, on the other hand, they whose "difficulties" are to be "removed" by this concession, will be satisfied with nothing short of it. Of all the other questions discussed in this volume, there is not one in which they would feel the slightest interest, unless so far as the way in which it is treated may seem to lead to that conclusion. Any rejection of particular miracles, any depreciation of the authority of Scripture, any attempt to do away with all specific difference between Christianity and other religions, or to reduce it to the smallest possible amount, they would welcome, as a

promising indication, as a step in the right direction, as an instalment of the full truth. But they would remain parted as much as ever by an impassable gulf from every view of Christianity which included a supernatural element. And so it has happened that those of the Essayists who have most startled ordinary readers by the boldness of their language, have in some quarters incurred the reproach of timidity, of a want of openness and sincerity. When so much was said, and by persons in their positions, it seemed incredible that more should not be meant. Where there was so near an approach, it was thought that only outward and temporary causes could have prevented a complete concurrence. Such censure might indeed have been regarded as a proof that those on whom it fell had observed the right mean, but only on condition that they had taken some pains to guard themselves against misapprehension by positive statements.

I have not thought myself precluded from bringing out the real character of the Essay which strikes most directly at the root of revealed religion, by the author's removal out of the sphere of personal controversy. He indeed has passed beyond the reach, not only of ecclesiastical censure, but of literary criticism. But this is by no means the case with his writings; though to some it has appeared a reason for refraining from pronouncing a decided judgment on his Essay. It can never cease to occupy the foremost place in every general survey of the volume. And he himself would

probably have strongly deprecated such forbearance. As a sincere lover of truth, a clear-headed thinker, and a practised writer, he would hardly have been thankful for an indulgence which assumes that his writings were not able to answer for themselves.

It might, however, well have been,—all things considered, it was, perhaps, rather to have been expected than otherwise,—that among the other contributions to the volume, there should have been some one which might have served to counteract the impression likely to be made by his Essay, and that this might have induced the Editor to admit one which, if left to stand by itself, neither refuted nor balanced by an opposite view, seemed to be fraught with such alarming consequences. If such a corrective was to be found, there is perhaps none of the Essays in which it would more naturally have been sought than the opening one on the Education of the World. But the relation in which this stands to the other is one, I will not say of an opposite, but certainly of a very different kind. This indeed is no fault of the author, who only happened not to have provided for a want which he could not foresee; but it is a fact worthy of remark, as illustrating the general character of the volume. His Essay stands apart from the rest, as well in its subject as in the occasion which gave rise to it, having been originally delivered as a Sermon before the University of Oxford. It is in fact a Lecture on the Philosophy of History from the Christian point of view, and with special reference to Christianity. It was perhaps not

altogether a happy thought to ground a theory on the analogy,—due it may be to Pascal, who, however, employed it simply to illustrate the progress of knowledge [6],—between the development of the race and that of the individual. But the scheme is that the period preceding the coming of Christ answers to childhood, the age of law; the "whole period from the closing of the Old Testament to the close of the New," or that of the Early Church, to youth, the age of example. The latest, whenever it may have begun, is that of manhood, in its mature, still unabated vigour; and this it is in which we of this day have the happiness, a privilege indeed coupled with grave responsibility, to live. The distinctive character of the present period is, that the restraint of a merely outward law, and the

[6] *Pensées, Fragments et Lettres, ed. Prosper Faugère. Préface sur le Traité du Vide*, p. 98. After having pointed out the advantage derived by each successive generation from the accumulation of knowledge previously acquired, he proceeds: "De sorte que toute la suite des hommes, pendant le cours de tant de siècles, doit être considérée comme un même homme qui subsiste toujours et qui apprend continuellement: d'où l'on voit avec combien d'injustice nous respectons l'antiquité dans ses philosophes; car comme la vieillesse est l'âge le plus distant de l'enfance, qui ne voit que la vieillesse dans cet homme universel ne doit pas être cherchée dans les temps proches de sa naissance, mais dans ceux qui en sont les plus éloignés? Ceux que nous appelons anciens étaient véritablement nouveaux en toutes choses, et formaient l'enfance des hommes proprement: et commes nous avons joint à leurs connoissances l'expérience des siècles qui les ont suivis, c'est en nous que l'on peut trouver cette antiquité que nous révérons dans les autres."

influence of example, have been superseded by the supremacy of the "spirit," which is identified with the "conscience," and which has now "come to full strength, and assumed the throne intended for him in the soul," where he is "invested" with plenary and absolute judicial and legislative "powers[7]." This scheme includes a vindication or elucidation of the Divine wisdom in the arrangement by which the appearance of the great Example, in which character alone our Lord is viewed, was ordained to coincide with the world's youth. The peculiar fitness of this economy is thus explained:—"Had His revelation been delayed till now, assuredly it would have been hard for us to recognize His Divinity: for the faculty of faith has turned inwards, and cannot now accept any outer manifestations of the truth of God. Our vision of the Son of God is now aided by the eyes of the Apostles, and by that aid we can recognize the express image of the Father." "Had He come later, the truth of His Divine Nature would not have been recognized[8]."

All this was no doubt written with a view to edification; but language more directly suggestive of the most perplexing doubts, could hardly have been employed. It is not easy to understand on what ground a man of mature intellect can be required or expected to view an object in the same light in which it appeared to him in his youth; or why he should be better satisfied, if he was reminded that youth is the

[7] P. 31.

[8] Pp. 24, 25.

age most susceptible of lively impressions. That, to his riper judgment, might be exactly the reason why he should be no longer governed by them. And so those who have been taught that the age in which they live is one of independent thought, in which conscience is invested with supreme authority, and which is distinguished from former periods in the history of the world, not only by larger knowledge, but by superior clearness of view, must find it hard to reconcile this advantage with the requirement that they should look at a phenomenon of the past with the eyes of its contemporaries, whose "vision" had not attained to the same degree of keenness as their own. They must think it strange that they should be asked to recognize our Lord's Divinity, not upon any evidence directly offered to themselves, but on the ground of an impression made by His example on witnesses who, through the general imperfection of their development, were much less capable of accurately discerning the things presented to them, and above all of drawing correct inferences from the seen to the unseen. And this would appear to them the more unreasonable when they found it laid down that, whenever "conscience and the Bible appear to differ," the inference is, not that conscience is not sufficiently enlightened, but that "the Bible, if rightly understood, would be found to confirm that which it seems to contradict[9]." —"Conscience is the supreme interpreter[1];"— and its

[9] P. 44.

[1] P. 45.

system of interpretation is grounded on the postulate, that the true sense of Scripture is always conformable to its decisions. These at all events are to be obeyed, and the sanction of the Bible, when not evident, is to be presumed. And yet one and not the least authentic or important part of the Bible consists of the record left by the Apostles of that "vision," by which they were led to recognize their Lord's Divinity. But conscience would be abdicating its prerogative if it accepted the "aid of eyes," which were illumined with a light so much less full than its own. This would be a retrograde step, an example of that "tendency to go back to the childhood and youth of the world," which "has retarded the acquisition of that toleration which is the chief philosophical and moral lesson of modern days." This lesson has not yet been perfectly learnt; though "we are now men," we have still to grow riper in knowledge, and steadier in practice. We shall not have reached absolute maturity, until we have entirely ceased to rely on "the impulses of youth or the discipline of childhood," and submit to no government but that of our own principles. Those whose education has been so completed, will of course cast aside the aids which they no longer need to sustain their weakness. They will put away the childish and youthful things which they will have then outgrown. These general propositions are safe, but barren. The interesting question is, What are the things which fall under this description? Do they include that belief which it is the object of the third Essay to root up?

On this the author is silent, nor, under the circumstances in which he first produced his discourse, could he have been expected to speak. But he has reason to complain of a juxtaposition, by which a question which he had innocently suggested, has been brought into outward connexion with an answer which he would no doubt earnestly repudiate.

If of this Essay nothing more can be fairly said, than that it opens the broadest room for an assault on the foundations of historical Christianity, without setting up any defence against it, this would not be enough to describe the bearing of some of the others on the same question. A much more positive impression on the same side is left by the second Essay, though it is on other accounts that it has given more general offence than any other in the volume, and not least to those who most revere the honoured name which it bears on its title. It purports, indeed, to be only a sketch of the most important results of the researches of another author, which therefore could throw no direct light on the opinions of the reviewer. The difficulty of collecting these with certainty is much increased by the writer's characteristic manner; and might well seem almost insurmountable to one who was called upon, under judicial responsibility, to extract any definite propositions from such a series of epigrams and enigmas. But to any one who only desires to form a judgment on their main drift for his own satisfaction, there can be no doubt as to their general tendency, though it may not be quite clear to what extent they follow it out.

It is manifest that the review is designed, not simply as a report, but as a vindication of the views described. There is an occasional expression of dissent, but mostly on points in which the author, in the opinion of his critic, has erred on the side of credulity, and so in contradiction to the spirit of his own system. That any difference exists between them on any fundamental principles, which was not thought worthy of the slightest notice, would be hardly credible, as it would imply a want of candour and openness, where reserve would have been alike improper and unnatural.

The opening remarks, at least, are entirely the Essayist's own, and they bear mainly on the question of supernatural agency. Even here, indeed, the ambiguity which marks his style in the treatment of theological subjects, and which may perhaps be traced as much to the vagueness of his views as to the character of his mind, obliges us to be very cautious when we undertake to interpret his language, and somewhat distrustful of the result. But the passages which are most salient and pregnant, and which seem least likely altogether to conceal the thought which they may fail distinctly to express, all point unmistakably in the same general direction. It is only just to admit that they contain no express denial of the possibility of miraculous interference. They merely indicate the various grounds on which it has been questioned. It may even seem as if its reality was recognized; for it is said that there are "cases in which we accept the

miracle for the sake of the moral lesson[2]." But as it is certain that in fact no one ever believed in a miracle for the sake of a moral lesson, which indeed the miracle, as such, could not convey; so the context indicates the meaning to be, that we *accept* the miracle for the sake of the moral lesson, only as we accept a fruit for the sake of the kernel, in its shell, which we break and throw away: and this is in perfect conformity with the sense in which we have already heard from another of the authors, that "an alleged miracle is *accepted* on religious grounds." The writer is strongly impressed with the importance of the question; only, according to his wont, he states it in such a manner as to exclude the possibility of more than one answer; for when our choice is limited between the alternatives, "whether God's Holy Spirit has acted through the channels which His Providence ordained, or whether it has departed from these so signally, that comparative mistrust of them ever after becomes a duty," there can be no room for rational hesitation: and he himself anticipates an approaching unanimity on this head, among all whose minds are not either narrowed by priestcraft and formalism, or darkened by moral corruption[3]. Whether the question, thus stated, can be correctly termed a question at all, and is not simply a form of controversial argument which begs the real question, I need not ask. But certainly there is a far *greater* question, one on which minds are at this day

[2] P. 51.

[3] P. 52.

divided, and on which, as we have seen, one of the contributors to this volume has pronounced a very decided opinion; namely, the question whether there has ever been in the history of mankind any interposition of a supernatural agency, or simply a course of events, ordained indeed by Divine Providence, but linked together in an unbroken sequence of purely natural causes and effects. This is indeed a great question, one of momentous bearing on the truth of Christianity; and it is also a real question, not involving the only possible answer, but one on which men may and do take opposite sides. This writer not only substitutes a fictitious and misleading question for the real issue, but passes over the single important point in a silence which, considering the occasion for speech, we can hardly help regarding as emphatic. It is not he who will pronounce supernatural interference impossible; all that he maintains is, that if possible, it would be useless, and that the whole result of the most mature observation on the education of the world is in favour of the opposite alternative. Yet his language might lead an incautious reader to believe that he had incidentally conceded the whole matter in dispute; for in a note he speaks of an "irrational supernaturalism." It may seem to follow that he admits a supernaturalism which he regards as rational. And so indeed he does; but no one who studies the context can fail to see what kind of supernaturalism this is [4]. It is simply the

[4] M. E. Renan, in his *Etudes d'histoire religieuse*, p. 137, has a note on the use of the term *surnaturel*, which may help to throw

order of Divine Providence, which so far may be said to be above nature, though strictly limited to natural "channels." The actings of the Holy Ghost through these channels are supernatural, inasmuch as they are in their origin Divine, though not at all confined to the Christian revelation. That is a revelation, but only in the same sense, in which every religion which contains any "elements of good" is a Divine, and therefore supernatural revelation also.

The Essayist, whose opinions in this volume it is sometimes difficult to distinguish from those of the author whom he reviews, had previously written much on kindred topics. And the conclusion to which I was led, as to the impression likely to be made by a work in which he spoke throughout in his own person, was that "its ultimate tendency was to efface the distinction between natural and revealed religion." His reply to that remark was in the form of a question, raising a

light on the sense in which it is employed by the Essayist. Having observed in the text, "l'essence de la critique est la négation du surnaturel," he subjoins in the note: "Une explication est devenue nécessaire sur ce mot, depuis que des écrivains ont pris l'habitude de désigner par le mot *surnaturel* l'élément idéaliste et moral de la vie, en opposition avec l'élément matérialiste et positif. En ce sens, on ne pourrait nier le surnaturel sans tomber dans un grossier sensualisme qui est aussi loin que possible de ma pensée; car je crois au contraire que seule la vie intellectuelle et morale a quelque prix, et une pleine réalité. J'entends ici par surnaturel le *miracle*, c'est-à-dire, un acte particulier de la Divinité, venant s'insérer dans la série des événements du monde physique et psychologique et dérangeant le cours des faits en vue d'un gouvernement special de l'humanité."

doubt as "to the reality of the distinction between Natural and Revealed, and whether it does not diminish, if not vanish, upon a view of the comprehensiveness of the Divine dealings," or "upon examination of St. Paul's argument to the Romans and Galatians." In perfect accordance with this intimation, he observes in the Essay: "It is not a fatal objection (to what he thinks the 'reasonable' interpretation of St. Paul's words) to say that St. Paul would thus teach Natural Religion, unless we were sure that he was bound to contradict it;" and that it would be a great "relief to some minds, to find the antagonism between Nature and Revelation vanishing in a wider grasp and deeper perception of the one, or in a better balanced statement of the other[5]." I need hardly observe that there never has been, or could be, a question as to a contradiction or antagonism between Natural and Revealed Religion—truth can never contradict truth—and therefore the supposed objection which is brought forward to be so refuted is purely imaginary; but it diverts the reader's attention from the real point at issue, which is not, whether there is "antagonism" between Natural and Revealed Religion, but whether there is any essential distinction between them, or they are only different names for the same thing. This question must hinge on that of supernatural agency; on which, as I have said, I am quite aware that men may and do take opposite sides. But that a clergyman of the

[5] P. 81.

Church of England is at liberty to take which he will, I cannot so easily understand or so readily admit.

The Essayist adverts to a doubt which some may feel as to his author's claim to the name of Christian, notwithstanding the orthodoxy of his language: for he exposes himself, it is said, to the charge of "using Evangelical language in a philosophical sense." But in the critic's own opinion, the philosophical sense is simply the "reasonable" sense. He himself thinks it "possible to defend our traditional theology, if stated reasonably." That his author was an adherent of any more special philosophy than that of reason or good sense, the reader would never, by any word of his, be led to suspect. Indeed, if it were not almost incredible, it might be supposed that he was not aware of it himself. For when he has occasion to allude to the sources from which his author's speculations on the Trinity may seem to have been drawn, he admits that they have a Sabellian or almost a Brahmanical sound (and again, p. 90, a Brahmanical rather than a Christian sound). That they have any affinity to those of a School of much more recent date, and much nearer home,—not of Ptolemais or Benares, but of Berlin,—he entirely ignores. He is indeed partly aware of one wide difference between his author's position and his own. His author was "a philosopher sitting loose to our Articles," in plainer words, bound by no objections, save that of his diffusive Christian charity, to the Church of England: in that respect at full liberty, either absolutely to

reject any of her doctrines, or to adopt them in any sense or with any modification he might prefer. But how far such liberty may be rightfully claimed, or such laxity as to the Articles consistently exercised, by a Clergyman of the Church of England, is certainly a different question; one in which the example of the illustrious foreigner can afford no guidance to persons placed in entirely different relations. That which was possible for him "without any paltering with his conscience," may not be so for them. He indeed could reconcile his philosophical system with a faith which in him yielded the richest fruits of the Christian life. But in the judgment of his critic, this was rather an amiable weakness, than a model for imitation, for, as he thinks, "the philosopher's theology could hardly bear to be prayed[6]." It was better adapted to the School, than to the Church or the closet. The prayers of the Christian were "not brought into entire harmony" with the "criticisms" of the philosophical (Hegelian) theologian. This discordance is represented as indicating an imperfection, not in the quality of the theology, but in that of the religious consciousness. "It may be," it is said, "that a discrepancy is likely to remain between our feelings and our logical necessities:" but it is one "which we should constantly diminish;" not of course by a vain attempt to elude a logical necessity, but by reconciling our feelings, as well as

[6] P. 91.

we may, to a theology which will not bear to be prayed.

The most remarkable Essay in the volume is one which might have been entitled "a plea for National Churches established on comprehensive principles." We must all sympathize with the writer's object, so far as it is to vindicate the national character of our own Church, among others, against those who deny the lawfulness of any established Church, and we may fully assent to his general position, that the Apostolical Churches, though differing from it as to their relation to the State, were not more exclusive in principle, and were constantly tending toward that outward form into which they were finally brought by the recognition which they received from the Civil Power: though we may hesitate to adopt his opinion as to the extent to which the Apostles tolerated both the rejection of fundamental truths, and viciousness of life, among those who called themselves by the name of Christ. It seems to rest on a doubtful interpretation of some obscure texts, and on an assumption as to the nature of the Apostolical discipline, not warranted by our very scanty knowledge of the internal condition of the primitive Churches in the earliest stage of their history. But the question with which we are now concerned is not one of antiquarian erudition. It is one of the highest practical moment, which may and must be decided on general principles; and the Essay is chiefly occupied with a statement—which indeed

includes a discussion of a great variety of very important though subordinate questions—of the conditions on which a National Church, such as our own, may hope to endure and prosper. It cannot do so unless it realizes, if not in its absolute fulness, yet in a sufficient measure, the idea implied in the title which it bears, unless it is, as nearly as possible, not merely in name but in deed, the Church of the whole nation. But this, according to the author's view, it can never be, unless it be freed "from dogmatical tests and other intellectual bondage." It was, he thinks, the unhappy, though perhaps unavoidable mistake of Constantine, that together with his "inauguration of multitudinism," (that is, of a system including members in various stages of spiritual life, and not limited by Calvinistic terms of communion,) "by the sanction which he gives to the decisions of Nicea," he inaugurated the essentially incongruous "principle of doctrinal limitation." "Sufficiently liberated from the traditional symbols," a National Church like our own might comprehend all but Calvinistic Nonconformists (an exception indeed which would probably exclude four-fifths of our Dissenters). It will be untrue to its essential character, and will provoke separation, "if it submits to define itself otherwise than by its own nationality," or if it lays any restraint on freedom of thought and speech among its ministers, from which other classes are exempt[7].

[7] Pp. 173, 174.

Such being the general object in view, the question arises, how is it to be attained; or "what is the best method of adjusting old things to new conditions;" in other words, what changes are needed in the existing state of things? The result of this inquiry is, in the author's view, cheering and hopeful, to a degree which must startle many, who suppose the actual obstacles greater than they are. It turns out that they are more apparent than real, and that even now there is in fact next to no doctrinal limitation at all. In the first place it is observed, that "as far as opinion privately entertained is concerned, the liberty of the English clergyman appears already to be complete[8]." Many persons have been startled by this observation, just on account of its unquestionable truth. For a man hardly likes to be reminded that, as a free citizen, he is at liberty to harbour the foulest thoughts, and the most nefarious intentions, as long as he does not let them appear in word or deed; and the suggestion would certainly sound like the most shameless Jesuitical sophistry, if an English clergyman was really bound to any opinions, either by virtue of his office, or by subscription, or the use of certain formularies. But the writer proceeds to show that this is not really the case; that subscription to the Articles may mean any thing, and therefore means nothing; that to *allow* signifies only an acquiescence, totally distinct from approval, and consistent with the deepest abhorrence

[8] P. 180.

of the thing *allowed;* that nothing more definite is implied in the *acknowledgment* of them "to be agreeable to the Word of God;" partly because *acknowledge* may mean simply not to gainsay, and partly because it is impossible to fix the import of that to which the Articles are declared to be *agreeable.* For "when once the freedom of interpretation of Scripture is admitted," it will be "happily found" that "the Articles make no effectual provision for an absolute uniformity." The only question indeed will be, whether, with that freedom of interpretation which is advocated and illustrated in the Essay itself, they make any provision for any kind or degree of uniformity.

But since it turns out that a clergyman of the Church of England, if he only knew his own happiness, already enjoys almost absolute freedom, not only of thought, but of speech, unfettered by Bible, Articles, or Liturgy, what more can be needed to fulfil the idea of a National Church exempt from doctrinal limitation? All that remains to be done is to remove the appearance of a restraint by which some are perplexed and deterred either from the communion or the ministry of the Church; and for this purpose in the first place to abolish the bugbear of an unmeaning subscription, and let the Articles remain as a regulative symbol, not to be impugned. So treated, they will, it is supposed, be at once safe and harmless; secured from contradiction by the protecting statute, and incapable of provoking separation, because they will have only a negative value; a venerable relic, kept

out of the reach, both of rude desecration, and of superstitious use. The only remaining obstacle would arise from the Liturgical formularies, which "present a fair and substantial representation of the Biblical records, incorporating their letter, and presupposing their historical element." "If they embodied only an ethical result, addressed to the individual and to society, the speculative difficulty would not arise." But unhappily they seem, and are commonly thought, to do something more; and hence arises a fresh problem. But with this the author does not deal quite so satisfactorily as with that of the Articles. He does not propose to empty the Liturgy of doctrine, but merely points out that it can have no more definite meaning than the Biblical records themselves. But as it was not the real, but the apparent stringency of subscription that calls for its abolition, and for consigning the Articles to an honourable seclusion, so it would seem that the like appearance of a doctrinal character in the Liturgy requires a similar treatment, and that it cannot be safe to leave it in its present form, without any guarantee that it shall be effectually explained away, so as to evacuate it of all doctrinal substance. That which is so liable, so likely, if not certain, to create misunderstanding which may provoke separation, ought clearly, on the author's principles, to be either entirely abolished, or reduced to a form, in which it could not be suspected of embodying more than ethical results.

This however leads us to observe another defect in the scheme, which the author seems to have over-

looked. Even after all doctrinal limitation, hitherto either really or apparently presented by Bible, Articles, and Liturgy, shall have been cleared away, whether by legislative enactment or by an enlightened interpretation, still there is the clergyman himself who may provoke separation by his doctrine. He will indeed have been released from all restraints which were intended to secure what was called the soundness of his teaching; but no security is suggested to guard society and the Church against the mischief which he may cause if he should happen to have doctrinal opinions of his own; if, for instance, he should believe that the Articles are agreeable to the Word of God, in a certain definite sense, and that the Liturgy embodies something more than ethical results. Surely the National Church would have a right to be protected against the danger of schism, which would arise from the indiscreet disclosure of such views. It is not enough that a clergyman should be forbidden to impugn the Articles for the sake of those who assent to them. It would be equally necessary that he should also be restrained from giving offence to those who reject them, by preaching in accordance with his own view of their import. The proper use of the Articles and other doctrinal formularies, on the author's principles, would seem to be that they should serve as a table of subjects, from which the clergyman should be strictly enjoined to abstain in the pulpit. This, of course, would only affect the freedom of his public ministrations, and he would have no right to complain;

for, "as far as opinion privately entertained is concerned," he would still be at liberty to hold what are now called orthodox views.

But after the obligations of a minister of the National Church have been thus determined on the negative side, it is still necessary that some functions of a positive kind should be assigned to him, and he cannot be entirely divested of the character of a teacher. It is true this description does not exhaust all that may be properly considered as belonging to his office. His position may afford peculiar opportunities for beneficent action, which it will be a part of his duty to turn to the best account. But still the functions of a public teacher are at least among those which must always be most characteristic of his ministerial calling, and, indeed, will be rather likely to supersede every other. We must therefore see how these will have to be performed in that Church of the future which is foreshadowed in this Essay. If its language is to be understood in its most obvious sense, there can be no doubt as to the author's views on this head. It is clearly laid down[9] that "the service of the National Church is as properly an organ of the national life as a magistracy, or a legislative estate;" and that "to set barriers before the entrance upon its functions, by limitations not absolutely required by public policy, is to infringe upon the birthright of the citizens." If we wish to know what these needless

[9] P. 190.

limitations are, we find that they are the doctrinal limitations which have been before described as the bane of all Multitudinist Churches, and at variance with their essential character. "When the office of the Church is properly understood[1]," it will be found that its objects nearly coincide with those of the State. In fact, Church and State are only the Nation considered under different aspects. The immediate object of the State is the maintenance of public security and order. But the Nation, if it is conscious of its highest objects, "will not content itself with the rough adjustments and rude lessons of law and police." The State itself will desire that all its people should be brought under a moral influence, which will supply motives of conduct, operating toward the same end, but at once nobler, stronger, and purer than those which only impose an outward restraint. For the fulfilment of this desire, the nation "will throw the best of its elements into another mould," and out of them "constitute a spiritual society," to exercise that "improving influence," under which the State would have "all its people to be brought." This society is the Church. But the purposes both of Church and State would be defeated alike by "errors and mistakes in defining Church membership, and by a repulsive mode of Church teaching." The preservative against this danger, even if it was not distinctly pointed out, would be obvious enough from the nature of the case. It is to confine

[1] Pp. 194 foll.

the Church's teaching to matters in which Church and State have a common interest. But the State can have no "concern in a system of relations founded on the possession of speculative truth." And therefore this is and should be treated as alien to the object of the Church. "Speculative doctrines should be left to philosophical schools. A National Church must be concerned with the ethical development of its members, and the wrong of supposing it to be otherwise, is participated by those of the clericalty who consider the Church to be founded, as a society, on the possession of an abstractedly true and supernaturally communicated speculation concerning God, rather than upon the manifestation of a divine life in man."

It is impossible to listen to such a reflection without asking how far it is well founded. And this concerns us the more nearly, the more fully we assent to the author's general view of the proper object of a National Church. That this is to act on the spiritual nature of its members, with a view to their ethical development, we shall all, I trust, readily admit, however conscious we may be of our individual shortcomings, in our several contributions toward the progress of the work. But while we may be surprised to hear any one—above all, one of our brethren in the ministry—speak of any thing which we regard as *supernaturally communicated truth*, as a *speculation*, so long as we believe ourselves to be in possession of such truth, we could not without both great dishonour to it, and I hope no little injustice to ourselves, as a body, admit that

absence of all real connexion between such truth and the manifestation of a divine life in man, as both this reproach of "the clericalty," and the whole tenor of the author's statements, assumes. We cannot be more thoroughly convinced of the truth itself, than we are that, if supernaturally communicated at all, it was so with a view to that manifestation. We may indeed have reason to reproach ourselves with the imperfection of our mode of teaching in this respect, however we may question the right of any one of our number to rebuke the rest on this score: but we are very sure that, if our best endeavours are inadequate to the object, it is not because we are mistaken in supposing a connexion between the truth and the life, but because we are not ourselves sufficiently impressed, and therefore fail to impress others, with its reality.

It is not essential to my immediate object to inquire how far the proposed solution of the problem, "the best method of adjusting old things to new conditions," is practicable. We are now concerned rather with the principles on which it is founded, than with the measure of success which may be likely to attend it. But yet the practical inquiry is not only interesting in itself, but may help to throw light on the theory. The author himself indeed warns us against extravagant expectations. "It is not to be expected," he says, "that terms of communion could be made so large as by any possibility to comprehend in the National Church the whole of such a free nation as our own. There will always be those who from a conscientious

scruple, or from a desire to define, or from peculiarities of temper, will hold aloof from the religion and the worship of the majority." It is not easy to understand how either conscientious scruples or peculiarities of temper should keep any aloof from a religion and worship, which had been duly weeded of all "speculative doctrines:" but "a desire to define" would no doubt be in direct contradiction to the whole spirit of a scheme, which aims at the utmost possible levelling of all doctrinal barriers. It is only a little surprising, that the author should pass so lightly over this obstruction, and should appear to be so little aware of the extent to which it is likely to interfere with the comprehensiveness of a National Church, such as would realize his idea. He considers Calvinistic opinions as fundamentally adverse to the very notion of a Multitudinist or National Church. How widely such opinions prevail among our Nonconformists, he seems hardly to have taken into account. Still less does he notice the great number of persons who—however inconsistently, according to his view—do in fact reconcile Calvinistic tenets with membership in the Established Church, and with the functions of its ministry. But those who do not hold these tenets may hold others to which they are not less decidedly attached, and if so, "the desire to define" will in them be very likely to take the shape of a strong repugnance to terms of communion, which in their judgment are not sufficiently definite. The one class would say: "If we tolerate a National Church, which we admit is not quite in har-

mony with our principles, it is only on condition that it teaches sound doctrine." The others would say: "Much as we value a National Church, we must abandon it, if it renounces its office of teaching that which we believe to be the truth." Even in point of numbers, those who would "hold aloof" or separate themselves from the new National Church, just on account of its breadth and freedom, would constitute a very formidable secession. But, what is a still graver consideration, these dissenters would include almost all the earnest religious feeling of the nation. The author alludes to the masses both of the educated and the uneducated class, who—as appeared from the census of 1851—neglect to attend any means of public worship. He supposes these persons to be "alienated from the Christianity which is ordinarily presented in our churches and chapels," solely "because either their reason or their common sense is shocked by what they hear there." This is indeed a somewhat bold assumption, and it might have seemed possible to assign a different cause for the absence of some at least of them from all public worship. But if we give all of them credit for higher intelligence and a finer moral sense than belong to the rest of their countrymen, we can hardly believe their religious cravings to be very strong. Unhappily, it is a notorious fact with regard to very many of them, that they have been alienated from all Christian communion, not by "conscientious scruples," nor by "peculiarities of temper," least of all by "the desire to define," but by the total absence of

any kind of religious belief which could express itself in worship. They are practical, if not speculative, atheists, not acknowledging a God in the world, and living as if there was none. Beside those who have reached this extreme, there are, it is to be feared, many, both educated and uneducated, who are not less opposed to every form of revealed religion.

It may seem that this is the class most likely to be won to a National Church in which they would not be offended by any speculative doctrines, and the only business of the minister would be to promote their ethical development. The author deals in some detail with the case of persons, who hold aloof from the Church of England, because they are unable to reconcile its real or supposed dogmatism with the advanced state of their scientific or literary knowledge. For their benefit, or that of his brethren who may be called upon to recover them to the Church, he expounds the principle of "ideology." Even though for some time to come the formularies of the Church should continue to "present a fair and substantial representation of the Biblical records," their effect may be neutralized by the application of this principle. As the ancient philosophers could extract metaphysical or moral truth from the fables of the heathen mythology, without either pledging themselves, or requiring the assent of their hearers, to a single point of the mythical narrative as matter of fact, the like treatment may be applied to the Biblical records; and, however they may be emptied of the historical element, its place will be abundantly

supplied by the "ideas" which they will not cease to "awaken." The author thinks, indeed, that this method of interpretation has been "carried to excess" by Strauss[2], whom he represents with some exaggeration as "resolving into an ideal the whole of the historical and doctrinal person of Jesus." But not only has he omitted to draw any line which might have precluded this excess, but he seems not to be aware that on Strauss's principle no such line can be drawn, and that Strauss has only followed out his principle to its legitimate conclusion. The fundamental assumption, the groundwork of the whole system, is the absolute rejection of supernatural interference. When that principle is once laid down, there can be no exception or selection among miraculous narratives. All must pass out of the domain of history into that of fiction. When, therefore, the author says that "liberty must be left to all as to the extent in which they apply the principle," this does not correctly express the state of the case. On the one hand there is, instead of liberty, a logical necessity, by which the application must be carried to the denial of every supernatural fact of revealed religion. On the other hand it may be thought that the Church, when she teaches truths involving such facts, does fix certain "limits," beyond which such "liberty" cannot be "exercised," whether "reasonably" or not, consistently with the confession of her fundamental doctrines.

[2] P. 200.

But, at all events, nothing short of the extent which the principle requires will satisfy the scientific and literary sceptics, whose views are represented in the third Essay, and whom the author of the fourth wishes to conciliate by the substitution of the ideal for the real "in the scriptural person of Jesus."

It only remains to consider what will be gained when this has been done, and what is the prospect of winning the irreligious class for whose sake we are to run so great a risk of losing all who sincerely profess the faith of Christ. They will not be offended by the announcement of any "supernaturally communicated truth." In the teaching of the National Church, when its office is properly understood, theology will make way for "ethical results." It is assumed—with what seems to me a strange neglect of patent facts—that as to ethical results no speculative difficulty would arise; as if a perfect unanimity prevailed among the professors of moral philosophy, or their various systems all led to the same practical results. But since the National Church is still to be, in name at least, a Christian Church, its ministers will probably teach Christian ethics. But can they, indeed, reckon on a general acceptance of this system among those who reject the supernatural origin of Christianity? Will it not be necessary that they should allow equal latitude in ethical as in theological speculation? If not, on what ground can they claim a hearing from those who take an entirely different view of the nature of happiness, of the obligations of duty, of the value and purpose of

life? If they preach active, self-denying charity and heavenly-mindedness to men whose maxim—the common, if not inevitable result of a materialistic philosophy—is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," what authority can they plead for their message? In what character are they to present themselves, that can give any weight to their exhortations? They may indeed say, "We do not pretend to guide your speculative opinions. You are at perfect liberty to think as you will as to the origin and the doctrines of Christianity. We do not even absolutely require you to admit the historical existence of its Founder." And so far they may find willing listeners. But if they proceed to say, "All we ask is, that you should adopt the moral principles which Christ is supposed to have taught, and should regulate your conduct in conformity to them,"—the answer which they would have reason to expect would be, "We think ourselves the best judges of that which concerns our manner of life; and it is quite consistent with the religious opinions which you allow us to retain. We can understand those who, themselves believing in the divine authority of Jesus, come to us in His name. Though we cannot share their faith, we respect their sincerity and earnestness; we admit that they are acting in accordance with their own professions. But we do not know what right you have to call upon us to regulate our lives by your opinions, rather than by our own inclinations." And if such minds are prevented by unbelief from receiving moral instruction, it can hardly be expected that they

should be brought to join in public worship, for which some common basis of belief is still more requisite [3]. The more highly educated may, indeed, be able to apply the ideological principle, so as to reduce the formularies, which appear to involve dogmas which they reject, to a mere embodiment of ethical results. But they might justly complain of being required to go through such a process, for the sake of a result which they might attain as well without it. They may think that the parables and myths, which might once have been useful vehicles of truth, are no longer suited to that maturity of intellect and conscience, which distinguishes the present period in the education of the world. They may say, "For theologians these exegetical feats may be a pleasant exercise; for us they are neither needful nor profitable; and we cannot repress

[3] M. Jules Simon, in the concluding part of his work, *La Religion Naturelle*, discusses the question: "Si l'on peut et si l'on doit se mêler aux exercices d'un culte positif, quand on n'a pas d'autre croyance que la religion naturelle?" He feels a difficulty (un embarras) which he states thus: "D'un côté, la religion naturelle nous enseigne l'utilité et la nécessité d'un culte extérieur; de l'autre, il est évident qu'elle nous laisse bien peu de moyens de rendre témoignage de notre foi, et *qu'elle nous met dans une impossibilité presque absolue de nous associer pour prier*." Nevertheless, he answers the question, though with evident reluctance, in the negative. This is very noteworthy, because his system of natural religion is really nothing more or less than a philosophical abstraction from the positive doctrines of Christianity, and appears to correspond as closely as possible to that which would be left in the National Church, when freed, according to Mr. Wilson's scheme, from "doctrinal limitations."

a misgiving that this tampering with the natural meaning of words is something worse than laborious trifling. It seems to us hard to reconcile with perfect openness and truthfulness; and we cannot help fearing that, however it may sharpen the intellect, it is not likely to produce a wholesome effect on the ethical development of those who practise it."

The drift of the whole scheme is to bring the Church down to the religious level of those who hold least of Christian doctrine; or—as this class is assumed to include the most enlightened minds in the nation—to lift the Church up to their intellectual level. And, unless the clergy are to lose all influence over this class, this is the level on which they must take their stand. The opponents of National Churches, who object to them on religious grounds, would think their cause gained, when it is admitted that a National Church can subsist only on such conditions. But the graver question is, how far such a society has any right to the name of a Church. It is not generally understood that this name would be properly applied to an association formed for the purpose of mutual "improvement," among persons of the most discordant views on all religious matters, even if it was possible that such persons might be unanimous as to the nature of the "improvement" which is the common object. A Church, without any basis of a common faith, is not only an experiment new in practice and of doubtful success, but an idea new in theory, and not easy to conceive. And when we remember the quarter from which

this proposal comes, it may well seem hardly credible that it can have been designed with so great a latitude. I have had this difficulty fully in view throughout my examination of this Essay; but, after not only the most attentive observation but the most careful search in my power, I have been unable to discover so much as a hint to qualify the apparently indefinite terms of the proposal. We have seen that no such limitation is implied in the admission, that there will after all remain some who cannot be gathered into the bosom of the National Church. For they will be excluded mainly, not by the nullity or vagueness, but by the definiteness of their belief. And then it must be owned that there is some force in the remark,—When a clergyman puts forth opinions, which he is aware must startle and offend great numbers both of the clerical and lay members of his own communion, it may be expected that, as well for their sake as his own, he will not express himself in language stronger or broader than is required for the full exposition of his views; that charity, no less than prudence, will lead him carefully to guard his statements from the risk of being misunderstood in a sense which would be commonly thought inconsistent with his profession. Otherwise he must be prepared to find that he is generally suspected of meaning, not less but rather more than he says; and that the ambiguity, which in a layman might be attributed to indistinctness of ideas, will in him be imputed to a calculated reserve.

This Essay is the practical complement of that which,

by the absolute rejection of all supernatural interposition, subverts the historical basis of Christianity. The one prepares us for a loss which it represents as inevitable, the other offers the compensation of an ideal to be substituted for the historical reality. That it retains any thing which would be inconsistent with the principle by which all that, in our traditional belief, is derived from such interposition, is referred to the evolution of merely natural causes, is nowhere intimated by a single word, and is a supposition at variance with the whole tenor of the Essay. It begins and ends with a speculation on the future state. The mystery of God's dealings with that large part of mankind which has not yet received the Gospel, is represented as one chief cause of modern scepticism; and it must have surprised some readers to hear, that it is only through an enlargement of geographical knowledge which has taken place "since our own boyhood," that we have become aware of the existence of populous empires in the far East, pagan, or even atheistic, which flourished many ages before the Christian era. Within the sphere of the author's observation, it is this recent discovery which has given the chief impulse to the sceptical movements of our generation; and, at all events he himself uses it to show that, "without a denial of the broad and equal justice of the Supreme Being," we cannot hold that "to know and believe in Jesus Christ is in any sense necessary to salvation," though such knowledge and belief may confer an advantage on its possessors, involving an "unequal distri-

bution of the divine benefits," of which "no account can be given." The solution of the difficulty is found in the uselessness of creeds; and the Essay, as we have seen, is chiefly occupied with the exposure of their worthlessness and noxiousness, and with practical suggestions for getting rid of them. It turns out, indeed, that even within the pale of Christianity the like difficulty arises as with regard to the unconverted heathen, and that we cannot be content with believing that the Judge of all the earth will do right, unless we determine—whether in contradiction or not to our Lord's words—what it is right for Him to do. I am here only concerned to point out how perfectly all this agrees with that appreciation of the author's views, to which I have been led from every other point in the Essay.

It seems needless for my present purpose to enter into any farther details on the contents of this volume. Of the three remaining Essays one is the work of a layman, and therefore, even if it had been distinguished from the rest by the boldness of its speculations, it would not have been liable to the censure which they have incurred. It might, indeed, have helped to mark more distinctly the character of the miscellany. But in fact it does not even so much as this. The author has used his privilege with great moderation. If he had been a clergyman, he would have had the same right to criticize the speculations of other authors, on what he calls the Mosaic Cosmogony; and the conclusion to which he is led does not differ essentially

from one which has been since proposed by a clergyman of unimpeached orthodoxy [4]. Still less would any one question the right of a clergyman to take a survey of the "tendencies of religious thought in England" in the last century, or, as the writer of the Essay on this subject likewise describes his work, of the Theory of Belief in the Church of England. It may be his own misfortune, as well as the reader's, that his researches should have led him to no more positive result than a suggestion, that it is very difficult to "make out on what basis Revelation is supposed, by the religious literature of the present day, to rest," while the general tendency of the investigation is to raise a doubt whether any of those on which it has been supposed to rest is sufficiently firm; and any one who should look for a hint to supply the defect would be utterly disappointed. This indeed is quite in accordance with the principles laid down in the previous Essays, but is not sufficient to charge the author with the responsibility of maintaining them.

The same remark will apply to the last Essay in the volume. The subject of which it treats, "the Interpretation of Scripture," is indeed of vast range, and in itself of all but the very highest importance: but, by the side of those which are discussed in other parts of the volume, it sinks into comparative insignificance. There may be, and are, wide differences of opinion as to the inspiration of Scripture, among those who believe in a

[4] *Replies to Essays and Reviews. The Creative Week.*

supernatural revelation: but for those who reject the possibility of such a revelation, an inquiry as to the nature of inspiration can have neither interest nor meaning. The view of the question taken in the Essay may be that which those who reject supernatural revelation are forced to take: but it does not follow that the author is by his theory of inspiration at all committed to their denial of revelation. I have the less occasion to enter into this question, as I could add nothing to what I stated in a former Charge, as to its ecclesiastical aspect, and I have seen no reason to alter any opinion which I there expressed on the subject. We may well believe that the truth lies somewhere between the position of those who either altogether reject the existence of a human element in the Bible, or seek to reduce it to a minimum, and that of those who deal in the same way with the divine element. Whether indeed it is possible to draw a line between these extremes, in which the truth may be found, will depend on the farther question, whether the two elements are not so inextricably blended together as to forbid the attempt. But so much is certain, that there is no visible organ of our Church competent to define that which hitherto has been left undetermined on this point. I cannot profess to desire that such an organ should be called into action for such a purpose, or that a new article should be framed to bind the opinions of the Clergy on this subject, even if it should only serve—as we have seen proposed with regard to the rest—to mark a limit

which must be kept sacred from direct impugnment. But I earnestly deprecate all attempts to effect the same object by means of any authority, legislative or judicial, short of that which would be universally recognized as rightfully supreme, because fully representing the mind and will of the whole Church.

Looking at the volume as a whole, I do not understand how any one reading it with common attention can fail to observe, notwithstanding the variety of topics and of treatment, that all is the product of one school. I am not aware, indeed, that this has ever been disputed, and it would probably be admitted with complacency by all the contributors. The only question is as to the character of the school to which it belongs; and that this, so far as it may be inferred from the work, is mainly negative, is acknowledged by its warmest and ablest apologist[5]. All that can seem doubtful is, how far the negation extends; whether that which is rejected is any thing essential to the Christian faith, or only some things which have been erroneously deemed such, but are really no more than excrescences, once perhaps harmless, but now burdensome and hurtful. Such, no doubt, is the light in which it is viewed by the authors themselves. I have already stated the grounds on which I have been led to a very different conclusion; that the negation does reach to the very essence and foundation of Christian faith; that after the principles laid down in this work

[5] Edinburgh Review, p. 472.

have been carried to their logical result, that which is left will be something to which the name of Christianity cannot be applied without a straining and abuse of language. It will be no longer a religion, and will not yet have become a philosophy. No longer a religion, because it will contain nothing which is not supposed to have been originally derived from the processes of unassisted human reason. Not yet a philosophy, because it will retain many traditional elements, and will still appeal to authority in matters on which reason claims a supremacy, which, at the present stage of the education of the world, can no longer be questioned. It will have no right to exist, and will only be enabled to drag on a precarious, feeble, and barren existence by the force of custom and other external aids. How long it may so linger it is impossible to say; but its final doom, as that of all that belongs to a mere state of transition, will have been irrevocably fixed by the nature of things.

The character of a Church must depend on the view which it takes of its Founder. But the very name of a Church, in its received acceptation, implies that it regards its Founder as distinguished from the rest of mankind in some peculiar way, by His connexion with the Deity; as having in some special sense come forth from God. Otherwise there would be no distinction between a Church and a School of philosophy. No amount of admiration and reverence which the disciples of a philosophical school may feel

for their Master, not even if exhibited in periodical commemorative meetings, could entitle it to the name of a Church, so long as they acknowledge him to have been nothing more than an extraordinary man. This being distinctly understood, the case would not be altered, though in the fervour of their affectionate veneration they should sometimes style him divine. It might well be that in the National Church of the future foreshadowed in this volume, Jesus might continue to receive like homage from those who reject the possibility of a supernatural revelation, or admit it only in a sense in which the term would be equally applicable to any doctrine taught in a philosophical school. His human person might be invested with ideal attributes, independent of its historical reality, but equally suited to the purpose of an example; if indeed a mode of influence which was adapted to the nonage of the world, was any longer needed or useful in the present period of its education. But that which, in such a system, He cannot be, is a Teacher of superhuman authority. His sayings may retain their value, so far as they commend themselves to the reason and conscience of the readers; but that they are His, cannot exempt them from contradiction, or give them any decisive weight in controversy. Least of all could He be an object of personal faith. A man of strong though coarse and narrow mind, an avowed unbeliever, whose only pretence to the name of Christian, which it was convenient to him not to renounce, was, as his biographer states, an impertinent assent to some of

Christ's moral precepts[6], writing to one who sought his guidance in his religious inquiries, said, "If you find reason to believe that Jesus was a God, you will be comforted with the belief of His aid and His love[7]." Such comfort of course can never be enjoyed by those who reject the possibility of supernatural revelation. Nor can they consistently join in the worship of one who differs from themselves only as a rare sample of their common nature. The language in which He is addressed by our Church would be rank idolatry. In a word their Christology is one which, to borrow a significant phrase of one of our authors, *will not bear to be prayed.*

But though I cannot but regard this book as the production of a school to which all the contributors belong, I would not be understood to mean that all of them have followed out its principles to that degree of development which is disclosed in two or three of the Essays. I have endeavoured to mark as clearly as I could the position in which each appears to me to stand with regard to it. Most of them probably would recoil from this extreme as utterly repugnant to their

[6] Thomas Jefferson: par Cornelis de Witt, p. 347. "Son prétendu Christianisme n'allait pas au delà d'une adhésion impertinente à quelques-uns des préceptes moraux du Christ." At p. 4 he quotes from Jefferson's Works a passage which illustrates the looseness of this adhesion: "It is not to be understood that I am with Him (Christ) in all His doctrines. I am a Materialist; He takes the side of spiritualism."

[7] Jefferson's Memoirs and Correspondence, by Thomas Jefferson Randolph. Vol. ii. p. 217. Letter to Peter Carr.

feelings and convictions. It is possible that hardly one of them has placed it distinctly before his mind, even while making statements which involve it by the most direct and necessary implication. These, however, are merely personal considerations, with which I am not concerned, and to which I advert only to guard against misunderstanding. The unity of the general tendency is, I think, too manifest to be fairly denied; and in two, at least, of the Essays this tendency has been carried very near indeed to its ultimate point both in theory and practice. The theory is perfectly intelligible in itself, and only not familiar to us in the quarter from which it has been recently announced. But its practical application, in the proposed "adjustment of old things to new conditions," is not only startling from its novelty, but one of which happily it is not easy for us at present to form a clear conception. This, however, does not prevent it from being highly worthy of our most serious attention. And we may be in some danger of undervaluing its significance.

The ideal sketched in this volume of a National Church, without a theology, without a confession, without a creed, with no other basis of united worship than a system of universal equivocation, has probably struck many with surprise at its extravagance. The scheme by which it is to be realized seems to exhibit an incongruity, almost amounting to direct opposition, between the means and the end. It aims at the cementing of religious unity, by a process apparently tending to the most complete disintegration of all

religious communion. It proposes to attract larger congregations to our services, by extinguishing as much as possible the devotional element in them, and turning our churches into lecture-rooms, for the inculcation of ethical common-place, as to which there is supposed to be no room for any difference of opinion in the audience. To many it must be a satisfaction to feel sure that if, in some paroxysm of public delirium, such a thing was to be set up under the name of a National Church, it would, even without any outward shock, through its intrinsic incoherence, very speedily crumble into dust. And so it may be thought almost a waste of time to dwell upon it. But whatever may be the merits of the scheme, here is the fact, that it has been put forth by a clergyman of no mean ability and of considerable Academical reputation. And then, though among ourselves it is still only in the state of a crude project, it is not a mere dream. It has been realized elsewhere. There are Protestant Churches on the Continent, in which the preachers are not prevented by their open rejection of the supernatural basis of Christianity, from solemnizing the Christian festivals by discourses, in which the idealizing principle fills the place of the historical reality [8]. It would, perhaps, be

[8] *Predigten aus der Gegenwart.* Von D. Carl Schwarz. It is however due to the author to observe, that the anti-supernaturalistic views, which are so distinctly avowed in the Preface, are so little obtruded on the hearer in the sermons themselves, that several of them might easily be mistaken for an expression of the ordinary Christian belief. In an excellent Essay by Dr. J. J.

not impossible that a brilliant eloquence might render such rhetorical exercises attractive to some hearers among ourselves. For a time, at least, the contrast between the traditional occasion and the views of the preacher might give a certain zest to the entertainment; though few can imagine that, on the whole and in the long run, such a substitute for the Gospel of Christ would be found to satisfy either the educated or the uneducated classes in this country; still less that it could ever exert any beneficial influence on their minds and hearts. But we are not yet generally prepared to entertain such a question. Most of us think it rather too much, that such a scheme should have appeared in print under a respectable name. Any proceeding which looked like the beginning of a movement for carrying it into effect, would be regarded by the great body of English Churchmen with suspicion and alarm.

I am therefore not surprised that a proposed amend-

Prins of Leiden, on "The Reality of Our Lord's Resurrection from the Dead," I find the interesting statement (p. 3), that in the General Synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands in 1860, the question was raised, "whether a candidate who denies the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical fact, is admissible into the ministry." To this question no answer was given by the Synod as a body; but those of its members who were charged with the consideration of the question did not hesitate to declare, each for himself, "that they should not deem themselves competent or able (dat zij zich niet bevoegd noch in staat zonden achten) to exercise the ministry of the Gospel in the Reformed Church if they did not believe with all their heart, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day."

ment of the Act of Uniformity which, though I believe framed with a very different view, might be considered as a first step in this direction, was rejected last session in the House of Lords by a great majority. I am not aware that any argument was adduced in behalf of the declaration which it sought to abolish, considered in itself. Those who wished to preserve it, did not profess that it was one which they would have adopted, if it had been then for the first time submitted to deliberation. Probably every one felt that it was indefensible on its own merits. It was too notoriously a characteristic monument of evil days, on which Churchmen can look back only with sorrow; the offspring of a vindictive spirit, which so far overshot its mark, as to ensure the defeat of its own object. For, interpreted literally, it would bind every one who makes it to the opinion that the Prayer Book is, what no uninspired composition can be, absolutely faultless; and in the construction of such a document, the passions of those who framed it, however notorious, cannot be allowed to determine its meaning, which, as the mind of the Legislature, must be supposed to be reasonable and just, at least not to involve any thing manifestly absurd and impracticable. And therefore, though I should be glad to see it abolished, I believe that the mischief it has caused, apart from the discredit it has cast on the Church, has been greatly exaggerated. But, viewed in the light reflected on it by the proposal we have been considering, it not unnaturally lost its true colours, and instead of an odious display of sectarian

animosity, and a dark blot on our ecclesiastical legislation, presented the aspect of a precious safeguard against a danger which threatens the life of the Church. I can fully understand this illusion, though I should be loth to share it. For I can never believe in a necessary connexion between that which is bad and wrong in itself, and any thing really valuable or sacred, however long they may have stood side by side. The parasitical bygrowth does not really support, but, on the contrary, compresses and weakens the stem to which it clings. In the present case—as was observed in the debate—there is the less need to retain an indefensible form, as its place might be supplied by another, which would answer every useful purpose, while free from all reasonable objection.

The failure of this attempt may serve as a sample of the difficulty which may be expected to attend the introduction of any larger measure of a like nature. Those indeed who are most fully convinced of the importance and necessity of subscription as a condition of office in the Church, might, notwithstanding, if not on that very account, most earnestly desire the abolition of a particular form which seems to them useless and mischievous. And therefore the proposal which has been recently made[9], to remedy the evils which are supposed to arise from the present state of sub-

[9] *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of London on the State of Subscription in the Church of England, and in the University of Oxford.* By Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D.

scription, by doing away with all subscription to the Articles and Prayer Book, and substituting a general declaration and promise of approbation and conformity, with regard to doctrine, worship, and government, or discipline of the Church of England,—is not merely one of much broader scope, but of an essentially different kind, resting upon altogether distinct grounds. But if it was to be presented for legislative action, it would most probably have to encounter a still more determined and general opposition. This however is no reason why it should not be carefully weighed and calmly discussed; though even this is rendered difficult by its apparent affinity to the suggestions of the writer whose views on this subject I have set before you. It must, I think, be admitted that subscription to formularies, if it does not answer the purpose for which it is exacted, is likely to be worse than useless. It is in that case an unjustifiable restriction of personal freedom, which cannot fail to be attended with pernicious consequences. It may be discovered that it never did answer its purpose, or that it does so no longer. In either case, when the fact is well ascertained, the requirement ought to cease. Perhaps it may be added, that, in a country where institutions of every kind are open to unlimited freedom of discussion, it will inevitably do so sooner or later. The argument which has been urged in behalf of the declaration which many wish to see expunged from the Statute Book, that, although it would have been better if it had never been imposed, yet, having once been enacted, it

must be retained, because its abolition might be misconstrued into a legislative sanction of unconscientious conformity, is one which at the utmost can only have weight so far as to suggest some easy precaution against such misapprehension. But, on the other hand, the right and fitness of calling upon those who are to minister in the Church, to express in some form or other their assent to the doctrine which is to be the matter of their teaching, can hardly be denied; and even the largest measure of relaxation which has yet been proposed, does not dispense with the obligation altogether, but only imposes it in a more simple or less definite form. This very much narrows the question, but not I think in favour of the proposed innovation. At present I do not believe that we are sufficiently in possession of the most material facts of the case. It seems to me open to great doubt, whether the existing state of subscription is fairly chargeable with the evils which have been imputed to it, and whether its alleged "inefficacy" has been clearly proved. As to the first of these points I will only remark that it must always be extremely difficult, without an intimate acquaintance with the persons concerned, to ascertain whether those who are said to have been repelled from Holy Orders by the terms of subscription, would have been able to undertake or to retain the ministerial office, if no subscription had been required. And with regard to the second point, it must be observed that, although subscription has failed, and must always fail to secure complete unanimity in all particulars, it does not follow

that it has been inefficacious toward maintaining a general substantial agreement in matters of doctrine among the clergy. It also deserves to be considered whether that which it has been proposed to substitute for the present form of subscription is not liable to the same objection. It is assumed that persons, who would scruple to subscribe or declare their assent to the Articles and Prayer Book, would be willing to declare their approbation of the doctrine of the Church. But surely this can only be if they forget to inquire where that doctrine is to be found. Unless they are satisfied that it is not either in the Articles or the Prayer Book, the omission of these names from the form of subscription will afford no relief to their scruples, as they would implicitly bind themselves to the contents of those formularies just as much as if they were expressly designated. Reference has been made, as to an example in point, to some Nonconformist bodies in which, though no subscription is required, there is said to be "a marked uniformity of opinion on all important points, though with some diversity in minor matters." No doubt, a congregation which can any moment at its pleasure dissolve its connexion with its minister, can care little about his previous professions of orthodoxy; as all know that his teaching will be sure to conform to their opinions, not only "on all important points," but even in "minor matters" which happen to interest them. I hardly need observe how inapplicable this is to the case of a clergyman who has no motive, but either a sense of duty, or a

wish to avoid giving offence, for adapting his teaching to the sentiments of his hearers. To them, in proportion to the soundness of their own churchmanship, it must be a matter of no little interest to know that their pastor acknowledges a rule of faith in accordance with their own belief. If we were to look abroad to the condition of the Churches in which subscription has been either abolished, or retained in a merely nugatory form, which leaves a boundless latitude of opinion to the subscriber, we shall not, I believe, if we set any value on Christianity, be much tempted to imitate their example. If there are some from which we might gain a lesson, there are far more which can only serve as a warning. It is true, where the licence has been carried to the utmost excess, the relaxation of subscription has been not so much the cause as the sign or the effect. But the farther we are actually removed from such a state of things, the more loth should we be either to hasten its approach, or to anticipate any of its results.

I am aware that I have already trenched on the ordinary limits of a Charge; and yet I have not touched on the subject which has occupied the attention of the Church during the last twelve months more than any other: the publications of the Bishop of Natal. In the absence of any special motive for addressing you earlier on this subject, I thought it best to wait for the present opportunity; and I now gladly avail myself of it to state the reasons which, on more than one occasion, prevented me from concurring

in the course which the greater part of my Right Reverend brethren thought fit to adopt in this matter. On one of these occasions, the ground of difference was a question, not of principle, but of personal feeling, which may therefore be dismissed in a very few words. It was thought that, in the first Part of his work, the author had made admissions, showing that he was conscious of an inconsistency between his avowed opinions, and his office in the Church, which warranted an appeal to his sense of duty, as requiring him to resign his functions. I was myself under the same impression as to the meaning of his language. But just on this account I could not reconcile it with my sense of fitness to join in a remonstrance, which seemed to imply, that the person to whom it was addressed was deficient either in intelligence or in moral feeling, and which otherwise must, as it appeared to me, be either superfluous or unavailing. All the facts of the case were before him, more fully indeed than they could be before any one else. It was also evident that the practical question arising out of them was distinctly present to his mind, and had occupied his most serious attention. Under such circumstances, I thought that the decision might be more properly left entirely to himself. It turned out, however, that the ground on which the appeal was made, was an erroneous interpretation of his words. He does not admit the alleged inconsistency, but regards his position as both legally and morally tenable. I cannot re-

concile this with his previous language: but as to the fact, that is, the view he takes of his own case, there can be no farther dispute. Whether that view is the right one, is of course a totally different question: but one which no private judgment is competent to determine. And although the legal aspect of the case is distinct from its moral aspect, there is so close a connexion between them, that the legal right, if ascertained, would involve a moral right. Only that right might or might not be exercised rightly. And in this respect, while I cannot but lament the tone of bitterness in which some have expressed their disapprobation of the author, if on no other account, because I believe it can only tend to strengthen his influence among a large class of readers, I must say that, after every allowance for the peculiar circumstances of the case, and with all the respect due to his sincerity and earnestness, he appears to me to have laid himself open to just censure.

It is true the Church of England not only permits but enjoins her ministers to search the Scriptures. It is not merely their right, but a duty, to which each of them is bound by his Ordination vows. The purpose indeed for which they are exhorted to the assiduous cultivation of this study, is entirely practical. It is partly their own growth in godliness, and partly the enlargement of their capacity for the discharge of their pastoral duties; "that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, they may

wax riper and stronger in their ministry." A searching of the Scriptures, undertaken with any other ultimate aim, would be one of those "worldly cares and studies," which they are charged "as much as they may, to forsake and set aside." But, apart from the general spirit of this admonition, the Church has not attempted to fence the study of Scripture, either for Clergy or laity, with any restrictions as to the subjects of inquiry, but has rather taught them to consider every kind of information which throws light on any part of the Sacred Volume, as precious, either for present or possible use. It was therefore in perfect harmony with the mind of the Church, that the Committee of the Lower House of Convocation appointed to examine the Bishop of Natal's book, "desired not to be understood as expressing any opinion opposed to the free exercise of patient thought and reverent inquiry in the study of the Word of God." But if the inquiry is to be free, it is impossible consistently to prescribe its results: especially with regard to matters which in themselves have no more immediate connexion with Christian doctrine, than any contents of what is commonly called profane history. It is indeed possible that the investigation of such matters may be found to have a bearing on very important points of doctrine, and may lead the inquirer to conclusions apparently at variance with the position of a minister of the Church. That may be his misfortune, but, if truth was his only object, would not be his fault. Nor,

considering the endless variety of minds, can we be sure that wherever this is the case, it proves that the inquiry was begun with a wrong aim, or conducted in an irreverent spirit.

But after these admissions have been carried to the utmost extent, there remain grounds on which, as it seems to me, the Church has reason to complain of the course taken by the Bishop of Natal in the publication of his researches. He was himself fully aware that it could not fail to be attended with consequences which he deplored. Perhaps he hardly appreciated the full extent of the evil, as well as enormously overrated the benefit which he expected to arise from it. But undoubtedly that which, above all things beside, gave currency to the work, was the apparent contrast between its contents and the author's official position. From the nature of the subject, not one reader in a hundred could be qualified to form a really independent conclusion on the reasoning itself. But there was one palpable fact manifest to all: that a Bishop was announcing opinions contrary to those which were generally received in the Church, and likely to subject him to much obloquy and ill-will. It would therefore be taken for granted by many who had no other means of judging, that he had not only been urged by the love of truth, but that opinions which nothing but a love of truth could have led him to promulge, must be well founded. This was in some degree an unavoidable evil. He could not limit the circulation of his work

to those who were able to appreciate the force of his arguments, and not in danger of being misled by his authority. In his own judgment, indeed, this inevitable mischief will be more than counterbalanced by the benefit which he anticipates from the publication, and when he assures us that his own reverence for Holy Writ is not abated by the discovery that it is full of pious frauds and forgeries, we are bound to believe an assertion relating to something which can be known only to himself. But when he would persuade us that Scripture will gain in general estimation, in proportion as such a view of it is commonly received[1], this is a paradox as to which we may well remain incredulous. But at least this conviction could not exempt him from the duty of doing all in his power to lessen the evil which he foresaw, and of guarding, as far as he could, against hasty judgments, which with many might shake the foundation of their faith, and of their whole moral being. The course which he has actually taken seems to me that which tended most to aggravate this danger.

There may be cases in which it is not only perfectly allowable, but expedient to publish the results of a literary or scientific investigation in successive parts. The criticism which they undergo in the intervals of the publication may modify the author's views and

[1] Part I., p. xxxiv. The object of the book is "to secure for the Bible its due honour and authority;" and Part II., p. 381.

contribute to the improvement of the work. But in the present case such a mode of proceeding could only lessen its value, and increase the mischief it might cause. One effect was to bring it into the hands of a larger number of such readers as were most likely to suffer injury from it. Another was to deprive it of the advantage it might have derived from a more mature study of the whole subject. This the author himself perceived; but unhappily was so feebly impressed by this consideration, that he allowed it to be outweighed by a motive of temporary convenience, which, in a matter of such importance, was hardly worth a serious thought[2]. Another effect still more to be deplored was that the premature publication of his first views entirely altered and almost reversed his own position with regard to them. The controversy which it could not fail to stir, as it imposed on him the part of a disputant, rendered it hardly possible for him to retain the character of a perfectly impartial and disinterested inquirer after truth. If he had committed himself to statements which maturer reflection might have induced him to modify, he could no longer do so without a sacrifice of self-love, of which few men are capable, and was thus exposed to a temptation, which those who have the best reason to trust themselves would perhaps most anxiously avoid. Still more open to censure is, as I think, the tone in which he has announced his conclusions; one which could

[2] Part I. Preface, p. xxxii.

hardly have been more confident if he had been favoured with a Divine revelation[3], and which too often seems to indicate a mind so preoccupied with a foregone conclusion, as to be incapable of viewing the subject from more than one side, and that unhappily the side directly opposed to his earlier and more natural prepossessions. The impression left on the unlearned or half-learned reader is, that these conclusions not only express the decided conviction of one whose station lends extraordinary weight to such opinions, but that they do not admit of fair or reasonable doubt, and may safely be taken for granted as "self-evident truth[4]," which can only be questioned through ignorance or bad faith. Unhappily a very large class of his readers were sure to be satisfied with this result, and would not care, even if they had the means, to know what might be said on the other side, and whether alleged "absolute impossibilities" might not turn out to be merely very difficult historical problems, capable of diverse conjectural solutions, though, for want of sufficient data, of none which leave no room for doubt. The author had been reminded by a judicious friend[5], that "we should be very scrupulous about assuming that it is impossible to explain satis-

[3] Part II., p. 371. "It is not I who require you to abandon the ordinary notion of the Mosaic authorship and antiquity of the Pentateuch. It is the TRUTH itself which does so." And again, p. 380, "Whatever is done, it is not *I*, but the TRUTH itself, which does it."

[4] Part I., p. xxxiii.

[5] Part I., p. xvii.

factorily this or that apparent inconsistency, contradiction, or other anomaly." But he has neither been himself sufficiently on his guard against this error, nor taken due care to inculcate the requisite caution on those of his readers who most needed it. They are not warned of the obscurity of the subject, of the relative scantiness of the historical data, of the constant danger of confounding the accuracy of arithmetical calculations with that of the premisses on which they are based. Difficulties are magnified into "plain impossibilities;" seeming discrepancies into direct contradictions. Whatever is narrated so as to raise such difficulties, is pronounced "unhistorical." This term, indeed, is explained so as not to involve a charge of "conscious dishonesty" against the writer, but the qualification loses much of its value, when it turns out that the absence of "conscious dishonesty" only means the obtuseness of his moral sense, which prevented him from feeling that there was any thing dishonest in a pious fraud [6].

[6] Part I., p. xvii. The comparison with Homer and the "early Roman annalists" misses just the most material point of the case. If the poet or the annalists had invented a story with the deliberate intention of introducing or recommending a religious innovation, however the end may be thought to sanctify the means, they could not be acquitted of an "*intention* to deceive." But with regard to them there is no reason to believe that they "practised" such a "deception;" while the Bishop's hypothesis distinctly attributes it to Samuel (II., p. 263). His act would be none the better though a heathen had done the like. It might be very much the worse, inasmuch as it was not a heathen who did

These, however, are questions which only affect the responsibility of an individual; and whatever harm may have been done by his indiscretion, if there was nothing more in the case, it could not be a subject of permanent public interest. That which alone concerns the Church in this matter is the character of that which has been published by one of her chief pastors, in its relation to her doctrine. Whether, and in what degree or proportion, the book contains truth or error, is, except so far as her doctrine is involved, a purely literary question, which may and must be left to the tribunal of literary criticism. The author regards his own ecclesiastical position as impregnable. That is a point on which I am quite incompetent to pronounce, and am not called upon to express an opinion. But his position might be legally secure, and yet be one which subjected him to the charge of inconsistency and unfaithfulness. And this is a question so intimately connected with the character of the Church itself, as fully to deserve all the attention that has been paid to it. Perhaps I might have said that it deserves a great deal more. For when I compare the amount of discussion which has been bestowed on the book in the historical or critical point of view,

it. But it is difficult to believe that, if the Bishop's work had not been published in successive parts, we could have read in Part I., p. xvii, that "the writer of the story did not *mean* it to be received as historically true," and afterwards (II., p. 263) that he wrote "the account of the revelation to Moses in E. iii.," "with the view of accounting for the origin of the Name."

with that which has been applied to its theological quality, without saying that there has been too much of the one, I must think that there has been far too little of the other. Strictly speaking I can hardly say that, of the theological kind, there has been any at all. Its place has been filled, as far as I am aware, by nothing but unverified statements and arbitrary assumptions. It was expected that Convocation, which met when the excitement caused by the publication of the first part of the work was at its height, would address itself to this subject, and in both Houses it was generally regarded as the most important to which their attention could be called. It was thought, indeed, by some that the reason which had led the Upper House to suspend its proceedings in the case of the *Essays and Reviews*, applied to this, and that it was not desirable to forestall the decision of a question in which personal interests were involved, when it was likely to be brought ere long before another tribunal. It was, however, decided that a Committee of the Lower House should be appointed to examine and report on the contents of the work; and thus its theological character was submitted to the scrutiny of a select number of eminent Divines.

This is the second occasion, since the revival of Convocation, on which it has undertaken to express an opinion on books. It is an exercise of its functions which had probably not entered into any one's mind at the time of that revival, and was certainly never expressly included among the objects for the sake of

which the revival was sought, still less contemplated by those from whom, notwithstanding much opposition, it was obtained. There were strong reasons, suggested partly by the past history of Convocation, partly by the spirit of modern times, which rendered it more than ever desirable that the newly-recovered liberty should be both sparingly and cautiously used; never without urgent occasion, and always within the measure marked by the nature of the end proposed. The urgency of the occasion must depend, partly on the character of the book, and partly on the special circumstances of the case. It will probably be generally admitted, that Convocation would be lowering its dignity, if it were to assume the office of a literary critic, and to pronounce censure on defects of taste, or judgment, or reasoning, or of any thing extrinsic to the proper domain of theology. But, even within that domain, there is much that does not properly come within the province of Convocation. There may be a great deal of very bad, unsound divinity, crude theories, rash speculations, erroneous opinions, such as, if developed into their ultimate issues, might even be found at variance with fundamental truths, which, nevertheless, Convocation neither need nor ought to notice. It appears to me that whatever error it does undertake to deal with, should be such as at once touches the foundation, and lies very near to the surface; in other words, that its action in the censure of books should be confined to cases in which clergymen have either directly, or by plain implication, impugned

the doctrine of the Church as universally admitted to be laid down in her Formularies. No mistake which Convocation could commit, could be more disastrous to its credit and usefulness, or more imperil its very existence, than if it should attempt to circumscribe the freedom of opinion sanctioned by the Church by any new determination of its own, or should identify itself with any religious party, and endeavour to make its views the standard of orthodoxy. On the other hand it may seem superfluous to observe, that the judgments of such a body should be delivered in precise and unequivocal terms.

The Judgment of Convocation, founded on the Report of the Committee of the Lower House, is memorable as the first which it has pronounced since its revival. The doubt which was felt whether it was advisable to take any action at all in the matter, though it was not allowed to prevent the passing of a censure, was permitted to determine the form in which the censure was expressed. I rejoice that it did so. Though I think that, if nothing more was to be said, it would have been better to have been silent, I am thankful that nothing more was said. But the form of the censure seems to betray the influence of a persuasion, which I fear has but very slight foundation in fact. It is natural that the members of Convocation, who take a lively interest and an active part in its proceedings, should be apt to overrate the importance attached to them out of doors, and the impression which they make on public opinion. There may have been a time

when its authority in religious controversies was generally acknowledged, and the simple declaration of its judgment, unaccompanied by any statement of the grounds on which it rested, was sufficient to ensure universal acquiescence. But such a state of things, if it ever existed, belongs to the remote past. We live in a generation which has but lately become familiar with the name of Convocation, and in which it is not always associated with feelings of submissive veneration and unquestioning confidence. There are some who regard it with distrust and aversion. Others watch it as an institution on its trial. Many, no doubt, look to it with respect, sympathy, and hope. But I believe that its warmest friends are aware that its credit and influence must depend, not on a time-honoured name, or conventional epithets, but on the character of its proceedings, and that these will be submitted to the same free examination, to which among us all matters of public interest are subject. Nor would they wish it to be otherwise. The Resolution by which the Bishop of Natal's book was condemned, assumes a paternal authority which rather suits an earlier period in the education of the world; and it presupposes a childlike docility and obedience in those over whom it is exercised, which are now very rarely to be found. It also suggests the question, what practical purpose it was designed to answer. Two were indicated in the Committee's Report,—"the effectual vindication of the truth of God's Word before men," and "the warning and comfort of Christ's peo-

ple[7]." But it is not clear how either of these objects could be attained by a declaration, that the book "involves errors of the gravest and most dangerous character." Both seem to require that the censure should have pointed out the errors involved, or have stated the doctrines which the book had at least indirectly impugned, so as to make it clear that the alleged errors affected, not merely prevalent opinions, but truths universally recognized as part of the Church's creed.

To me, indeed, it appears that whenever Convocation undertakes to pronounce on a theological work, its judgment should be dogmatical, containing some definite theological proposition. Otherwise, it may convey an expression of feeling which is not required, and perhaps in such a case would better be suppressed, while it withholds the one thing really wanted, a declaration of distinct opinion on the teaching which it condemns. In the present case the vagueness of the judgment was the more remarkable, because the attention of Convocation had been specially drawn to certain propositions, extracted from the substance of the book, which appeared to the Committee to "involve errors of the

[7] How widely different an impression it has made on some minds, may be gathered from a paper in Macmillan's Magazine for July, 1863, where the writer, who describes himself as a "Lay Churchman," speaking of the Report of the Lower House, observes: "No friend of the Church of England can read it without shame and sorrow:" not without assigning reasons for his assertion. What is saddest in this is: "talia nobis et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli."

gravest and most dangerous character;" and the Judgment, taking no notice of these propositions, applies the same description to the whole book, and was thus the more likely to disappoint and perplex those who might look to it for some kind of guidance, or means of discriminating between truth and error. I cannot consider this as an auspicious inauguration of the revived judicial action of Convocation. But still, as I have said, it seems to me to afford matter for deep thankfulness, so far as the Upper House abstained from pronouncing on the propositions to which its attention had been drawn. It was infinitely better that it should confine itself to generalities, of doubtful meaning and little practical worth, than that it should have undertaken to dogmatize on those propositions. According to the view which I have ventured to take of the proper limits of synodical action in the cognizance of books, the Committee overstept those limits. They were appointed to examine the parts which had then appeared of the Bishop's work, and to report "whether any, and, if any, what opinions heretical or erroneous in doctrine were contained in it." They extracted three propositions which they characterized as we have seen. All that they say beside might, indeed, have entered into a controversial discussion of the work. But this was something foreign to the business with which they were charged. It was, not to refute any errors which they might find in the book—a task which probably no one would have thought of assigning to such a number of persons, however well qualified

each of them might be for it individually—but to mark the character of the opinions contained in it with reference to the standards of the Church's doctrine. To inquire whether they were tenable or not in themselves, was here wholly beside the purpose. Yet this is really all that is done in the Report.

It may seem indeed as if the Committee, in their mode of dealing with the first of the propositions which they cite or extract for censure, had shown that they were aware of the precise nature of the function they had to perform, and meant to confine themselves to it. That proposition is—"the Bible is not itself God's Word." The author himself immediately adds, "But assuredly 'God's Word' will be heard in the Bible, by all who will humbly and devoutly listen for it." Of this qualification the Committee, in their remarks on the proposition, take no notice whatever. But they first observe that the proposition, as they cite it, "is contrary to the faith of the universal Church, which has always taught that Holy Scripture is given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost." They seem to have overlooked that this statement, however true, was irrelevant; but they then proceed to refer to the Articles and Formularies of our own Church, which are, indeed, the only authority binding on her ministers. But unfortunately not one of the passages to which they refer applies to the proposition condemned. Many, indeed, among them do clearly describe the Bible as the Word of God. But not one affirms that "the Bible is *itself* God's Word." Before the negative of this statement

could be shown to be contrary to the language of our Articles and Formularies, it was necessary either to prove or take for granted that the addition *itself* in no way affected the sense of the proposition. This, however, being a matter depending entirely on the author's intention, did not admit of proof. But, for the same reason, it could not safely or justly (for the purpose of a solemn censure) be taken for granted. No doubt the expression indicated that the author made a distinction between the Bible and the Word of God, and considered the two terms as not precisely equivalent or absolutely interchangeable. But if he affixed a meaning to the term *Word of God*, according to which it might be truly said, that the Bible was not *itself* that Word, this—even if the proposition had stood by itself without any qualification—would not imply a denial, that there may be another sense in which the Bible is truly described as the Word of God. And there is certainly high authority for the distinction. Among the numerous passages of the New Testament in which the phrase, *the Word of God*, occurs, there is not one in which it signifies the Bible, or in which that word could be substituted for it without manifest absurdity. But even in our Articles and Formularies there are several in which the two terms do not appear to be treated as synonymous. The expressions, "God's Word written" (Art. XX.), "ministering God's Word" (Art. XXXVII.), "dispenser of God's Word" (Ordinal for Priests), "hinderer or slanderer of God's Word" (Office of Holy Communion), seem to point to the

New Testament use rather than to the Biblical record; and, at least, there can be no donbt as to the meaning in the Collect for St. Bartholomew's Day, where the prayer is, that God, who "gave the Apostle grace truly to believe and preach His Word," "would grant unto His Church to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same." When you, my brethren, preach the Word of God, it may happen that your text is the only portion of the Bible which you quote: and though even your text should not be taken from one of the Gospels, you might not feel the less sure that it is the Gospel which you preach. That which you preach would not, indeed, be the Gospel or the Word of God, unless it was agreeable to God's Word written. But there may be substantial agreement without literal identity, which would confound the offices of reading and of preaching. If the Word of God is to be found nowhere but in Holy Writ, not only could no other Christian literature be properly called sacred, but the Bible itself would be degraded to a dead and barren letter, and would not be a living spring of Divine truth. On the whole, the Report first attaches an arbitrary meaning to an ambiguous expression, and then charges it with contradicting authorities, which are either wholly silent upon it, or seem to countenance and warrant it. The appeal to the faith and constant teaching of the universal Church is not only, as I observed, irrelevant to a question of Anglican orthodoxy, but introduces a topic which is by no means necessarily involved in the proposition—the

inspiration of Holy Scripture; and a reader who did not verify the references, might easily be led to imagine that they contain some declaration of our own Church on that subject. Yet all they do contain that bears upon it, is the frequent application of the description *Word of God* to the Bible. Our Church has never attempted to determine the nature of the inspiration of Holy Scripture; and whether such a determination is desirable or not, no friend to Convocation would wish to see it undertake a task of such perilous moment, and so far beyond its legitimate province.

But in their treatment of the next proposition, the Committee seem almost entirely to have lost sight of the principle which, although misapplied, appeared to guide them in their examination of the first. For, with a single insignificant exception, they confront it, not with our Articles and Formularies, but with passages of Scripture. Quotations from Scripture may add great weight to a theological argument; they are essential for the establishment of any doctrine of a Church which professes to ground its teaching on Scripture; but they are entirely out of place where the question is, not whether a doctrine is true or false, but whether it is the doctrine of the Church of England. Some years ago the Venerable Person who was Chairman of this Committee, and is believed to have had the chief share in the framing of its Report, was charged with the publication of unsound doctrine with regard to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In those proceedings, though they affected his civil rights,

and but for a technical defect would have subjected him to penal consequences, the Court refused to listen to a plea set up in his defence, grounded on texts of Scripture. The principle of that refusal has since been repeatedly affirmed by the highest judicial authority. It was briefly, but clearly, laid down by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the following terms:—"In investigating the justice of such a charge we are bound to look solely to the Statute and the Articles. It would be a departure from our duty if we were to admit any discussion as to the conformity or non-conformity of the Articles of Religion, or any of them, with the Holy Scriptures." And in the more recent case of the *Essays and Reviews*, the Judge, commenting on that opinion, observed, "Were I once to be tempted from the Articles and other parts of the Formularies, the Court could assign no limit to its investigations; it would inevitably be compelled to consider theological questions, not for the purpose of deciding whether they were conformable to a prescribed standard, but whether the positions maintained were reconcilable with Scripture or not. Against pursuing such a course as this, the reasons are many, and in my judgment overwhelmingly strong." And after stating them he says, "I will not be tempted, in the trial of any accusation against a clergyman, to resort to Scripture as the standard by which the doctrine shall be measured." This is no legal refinement, but a plain dictate of common sense; and it does not at all depend on the composition of the tri-

bunal before which such questions are tried; so as to be less applicable if the Court consisted entirely of ecclesiastics. On one supposition only would such a plea be admissible, that is, if the Judge was acknowledged to possess the authority of an infallible oracle in the interpretation of Scripture. Otherwise there could be no security, that an argument from Scripture which to some minds appeared perfectly convincing, might not seem to others miserably weak, or utterly worthless. I should think it a great misfortune to the Church if Convocation, sitting in judgment on the orthodoxy of a theological work, though without any view to proceedings against the author, should ignore and practically reject that principle. And if in this respect the Report betrays the influence of a personal prepossession, which, however natural, ought not to be allowed to sway the decisions of a grave assembly, above all, so as to bring them into conflict with the highest legal authorities of the realm, we have the more reason to rejoice, that it did not obtain the sanction of the Upper House.

When I look at the Scriptural arguments adduced in the Report against the second proposition extracted for condemnation, they do not seem to me of such a quality as to deserve to form an exception, if any could be admitted, to the rule which would exclude them from such an investigation. The proposition is, "that not Moses but Samuel, and other persons of a later age, composed the Pentateuch." It would perhaps have been better not to have brought the negative and

positive substance of the book thus together, as the hypothesis about Samuel is, for the purpose of the inquiry, quite immaterial, except as denying the Mosaic authorship; and the argument of the Report is entirely confined to that denial. But upon this the Committee observe, "that Moses is spoken of, by our Blessed Lord in the Gospel, as the writer of the Pentateuch." I suspect that even a layman, little acquainted with the manifold aspects of the question, and the almost infinite number of surmises which have been or may be formed concerning it, would be somewhat disappointed, when he found that the proof of this statement consists of three passages, in which our Lord speaks of Moses and the prophets, of the Law of Moses, and of writings of Moses. It is true that it would not be a fatal objection to the argument, that the word Pentateuch does not occur in the Bible. It might have been so described as to connect every part of its contents with the hand of Moses, as distinctly as if the observation of the Committee had been literally true. But in fact this is not the case; and still less is any such distinct appropriation to be found in any of the passages cited by the Committee in support of their assertion, that "Moses is recognized as the writer of the Pentateuch in other passages of Holy Scripture." They are neither more nor less conclusive than the language of the seventh Article, to which the Committee confine all the reference they have made to the judgment of the Church on this question, though this was the only matter into which it was their proper

business to inquire. The Article alludes to "the law given from God by Moses;" a slender foundation for any inference as to the record of that law, much more as to the authorship of other parts of the Pentateuch; especially as the name of Moses does not occur in the enumeration of the Canonical Books in the sixth Article. If the question had been as to the authorship of the book of Psalms, few persons probably would think that it had been dogmatically decided by the Church, because in the Prayer Book the Psalter is described as "the Psalms of David." Similarly and equally inconclusive appear to me the passages cited in proof of the observation, "that there are portions of the Pentateuch to which our Blessed Lord refers as being parts of the books of Moses, the Mosaic authorship of which is expressly denied in the Bishop's book."

The third proposition, "variously stated in the book," relates to the historical truth of the Pentateuch, which the author denies; not in the sense that every thing in it is pure fiction, but that all is not historically true[8]. Of the fact with which he is charged there can be no doubt; and it was superfluous to give instances of that which he has expressly stated in general terms. But it is to be regretted that the Committee

[8] Part II., p. 372. The value, however, of the admission is not very great, since it is supposed that Samuel's materials consisted entirely of "legendary recollections," which were so dim and vague as to leave even the existence of Moses open to doubt. P. 376 (where Ewald's credulous dogmatism is gently rebuked by a note of interrogation) and p. 185.

should again have lost sight of the object for which they were appointed, and have omitted to refer to any doctrine of the Church which the author has contradicted. This was the more incumbent on them, since a recent Judgment has formally sanctioned a very wide latitude in this respect. It is clear that in such things there cannot be two weights and two measures for different persons, and also that it does not belong to any but legal authority to draw the line by which the freedom, absolutely granted in theory, is to be limited in practice. The author's scepticism appears to me, as to many others, very rash and wild. But that was not the question before Convocation. It was whether, or how far, such scepticism had been forbidden by the Church. And on this, the only point which required their attention, the Committee are totally silent.

These are the propositions which they extract as "the main propositions of the book," which, though not pretending to "pronounce definitively whether they are or are not heretical," they denounce as "involving errors of the gravest and most dangerous character." But they proceed to cite a further proposition, which the author states in the form of a question, to meet an objection which had been raised against his main conclusion, as virtually rejecting our Lord's authority, by which, as the Committee state, "the genuineness and the authenticity of the Pentateuch have been guaranteed to all men." Whether the passages in which our Lord quotes

or alludes to the Pentateuch, amount to such a guarantee, is a point which they do not discuss. They only observe that the proposition "questions our Blessed Lord's Divine Knowledge," and with that remark they drop the subject.

Considering that this proposition is incomparably the most important of all that they cite, and that whatever importance the others possess depends ultimately on the connexion into which they may be brought with it, one is surprised that it should have been dismissed with so very cursory and imperfect a notice. For it is not even clear that it correctly expresses the author's meaning. The question which he raises does not properly concern our Lord's Divine Knowledge, that is, the knowledge belonging to His Divine nature. It is, whether His human knowledge was co-extensive with the Divine Omniscience. It is obvious at the first glance, what a vast field of speculation, theological and metaphysical, is opened by this suggestion. And perhaps a little reflection would satisfy every one capable of appreciating the difficulties which beset the inquiry, that the subject is not only one of the most abstruse with which the human mind can be engaged, but that it lies beyond the reach of our faculties, and is one of those mysteries which are to be embraced by faith, not to be investigated by reason. If any one thinks that he is able to explain the mode in which the operations of our Lord's human nature were affected by His Godhead, or to distinguish

between that which belonged to the integrity of His manhood, to the extraordinary gifts with which He was furnished for His work, and again to the proper attributes of Deity, he is of course at liberty to make the experiment, but should not be surprised if his solution satisfies none but himself. Bishop Jeremy Taylor observes: "They that love to serve God in hard questions, use to dispute whether Christ did truly or in appearance only increase in wisdom. For being personally united to the Word, and being the eternal wisdom of the Father, it seemed to them that a plenitude of wisdom was as natural to the whole person as to the Divine nature. But others, fixing their belief upon the words of the story, which equally affirms Christ as properly to have increased in favour with God as with man, in wisdom as in stature, they apprehend no inconvenience in affirming it to belong to the verity of human nature, to have degrees of understanding as well as of other perfections: and although the humanity of Christ made up the same person with the Divinity, yet they think the Divinity still to be free, even in those communications, which were imparted to his inferior nature; and the Godhead might as well suspend the emanation of all the treasures of wisdom upon the humanity for a time, as he did the beatific vision, which most certainly was not imparted in the interval of his sad and dolorous passion[9]." It is clear to which side Taylor inclines.

[9] Life of Christ. Works, ed. Heber, ii. p. 142.

But I must own that I should be sorry to see these "hard questions" revived, as I am persuaded that there could not be a less acceptable "service to God," or a less profitable exercise of learning and acuteness. Still more should I deprecate any attempt of the Church of England to promulge a new dogma for the settlement of this controversy. And I lament that the Committee of the Lower House should have expressed themselves as if either there was no "dispute" on the subject, or it belonged to them to end it by a word. But at least, as their remark indicated, that the Bishop had, in their judgment, fallen into some grave error, it was due, not only to him, but to the readers of their Report, and to the Church at large, that they should have pointed out what the error was, by a comparison with the doctrine of the Church which it was supposed to contradict.

Little as I am satisfied with the contents of the Report, I think there is no less ground for surprise at its omissions. Since the Committee felt themselves at liberty to animadvert, not only on the propositions extracted from the book, but on its general spirit and tendency, it might have been expected that they would omit nothing worthy of special notice, as serving to mark its peculiar character. Yet, while they hold up to reprobation the results of purely historical investigations, because in their opinion at variance with doctrines of the Church, which however it is left to the reader's sagacity to discover, they pass over in silence passages which, however they may admit of a different

explanation, appear in their most obvious sense irreconcilable with the admission of a supernatural revelation. An eminent writer of the last century, who may be called the father of German rationalism, startled his contemporaries by the assertion, that as religion was before the Bible, so it might continue to subsist though the Bible should be lost [1]. It has been questioned whether in this proposition the religion meant was Christianity or Natural Religion. In the former sense the proposition was an idle surmise, which it was impossible to verify. But in the latter sense, it was admitted that it could be only understood as treating Christianity as no more than a form of natural religion [2]. The Bishop of Natal consoles himself for the "serious consequences" which he "painfully fore-

[1] So the proposition is stated by Gurlitt in the Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1863, p. 763. Mr. Farrar, in his Bampton Lectures on the History of Free Thought, p. 319, states a different proposition to the like effect: "that, as Christianity existed before the New Testament, so it could exist after it." There may be here, either a misprint, of *after* instead of *without*, or an omission of the words *was lost* at the end. Each of these statements no doubt expresses Lessing's meaning, though neither accurately reports his words. His fifth axiom is: "Religion existed before the Bible." The sixth: "Christianity existed before Evangelists and Apostles had written." The eighth: "If there was a period in which the Christian religion was widely spread, though not a letter of all that has come down to us on the subject had yet been written, it must be possible that all the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles should be lost, and the religion which they taught still subsist."

[2] Gurlitt, u. s.

bodes" as likely to ensue in many cases from the publication of his book, by this reflection:—"Our belief in the living God remains as sure as ever, though not the Pentateuch only, but the whole Bible, were removed." "The light of God's love did not shine less truly on pious minds, when Enoch walked with God of old, though there was then no Bible in existence, than it does now[3]." What kind of religion it is that would thus survive the loss of the Bible, seems, as far as the words go, hardly to admit of a doubt. It may be called Christianity; but hardly in any other sense than that in which a deistical writer of the last century entitled one of his works, "Christianity as old as the Creation."

It is indeed, in the author's view, a revealed religion; but so was that which he finds expounded in a passage of Cicero, in the confession of the Sikh-Gooroos, and in the ejaculations of an Indian mystic. Their pure deism was, he doubts not, "revealed to them by the same Divine Teacher," who spake by prophets and apostles[4]. If there was no special revelation in Christianity, such statements would be not only conformable to the Apostle's teaching, that "every good gift comes down from the Father of lights," but also relevant to the case, and of great practical importance, as either showing the needlessness of Christian missions, or at least preventing them from assuming a character to which they are not entitled. But if

[3] Part I., p. 12.

[4] Part I., p. 155.

there was such a special Christian revelation, it is difficult to see either the appropriateness or the practical use of the remark. The author indeed intimates his "entire and sincere belief in our Lord's divinity[5];" and this must silence all doubt as to his orthodoxy on that head; but as he does not profess to view any of the founders of other religions in the same light, it might have been expected that he would have explained how that belief is to be reconciled with language which seems to place all religions, which acknowledge the being and unity of God, with regard to their divine origin, on the same level. The apparent sense of that language is also the only one that is clearly consistent with his anticipation of a coming happier time, when "missionaries of the Jewish race," as soon as they have "given up the story of the Pentateuch as a record of historical fact," shall go forth, to co-operate with our own as "heralds of salvation, proclaiming with free utterance the name of the living God[6]." It is in perfect harmony with this sense, but not with any other which the words readily suggest, that he looks forward to changes at home, by which "the system of our Church is to be reformed," and her boundaries at the same time enlarged, so as "to make her what a National Church should be, the mother of spiritual life to all within the realm, embracing, as far as possible, all the piety, and learning, and earnestness, and goodness, of the nation[7]." This hint indeed is so

[5] Part I., p. xxxi. [6] Part II., p. 384.
[7] Part I., p. xxxv.

vague, that it would have been difficult to gather its precise import, if the Essay, of which I have already spoken, in which a like view of the National Church is more fully developed, and the conditions of the proposed reform more distinctly explained, did not furnish a commentary, and relieve me from the necessity of making any further observation upon it.

I do not know how many of you, my brethren, may have found leisure for the study or even for the reading of the work I have been considering. Possibly if you happened to have learnt that its results are almost entirely negative, and that as to those of a more positive kind the author appears to have convinced no one but himself, not even foreign critics who willingly accept his arguments on the destructive side[8]; some of you might think, not unreasonably, that their time might be more profitably spent than in following the course of such a barren inquiry, and that it was better to wait until it should have yielded some amount of generally-recognized positive truth. If, however, you chose to judge of the book for yourselves, and did not allow yourselves to be deterred from the examination of its contents by the opinion that the Church had forbidden an investigation which presupposed that there was room for doubt on the subject, though you might soon see ground to suspect that the author must, from the peculiar turn of his mind, be a very

[8] Among the latest see Kamphausen in Theol. Stud. u. Krit. 1863, p. 795.

unsafe guide wherever there was need of the higher faculties required for the study of obscure periods of ancient history, you would nevertheless find proofs of no mean sceptical acuteness, and much specious reasoning, to which you might not be able readily to devise even a possible answer. This with you might not be enough to extort an absolute assent to that which you felt yourselves unable to refute; but it would probably induce you to read some of the replies, in which, as is stated in the Report of the Committee of the Lower House of Convocation, "the difficulties propounded by the author have been fairly discussed." From several of these replies you could not fail to gain much valuable information. You would find many things placed in an entirely different light from that in which they had been first set before you. In most cases the conditions on which the author's objections are founded, would appear to be by no means so simple or so clear as he had represented them. Relatively to his position of absolute assurance, you might think the replies on the whole perfectly successful. But if you had expected that they would remove all difficulty, and satisfy every doubt, you would find yourselves disappointed, as in fact you would have looked for more than, according to the present state of our knowledge, any amount of learning and ability can achieve. But, should this be so, what follows? There will be nothing in such a discovery, by which any one need be saddened or perplexed; but it may suggest some reflections which it will be well for every one to lay to heart.

There are many things in which our highest wisdom is to resign ourselves to the consciousness of our ignorance, and to the certainty that, on this side the grave, we shall never know more of them than we do. This is the case with many subjects of abstract speculation; and perhaps even more so with the history of the remote past, where our knowledge entirely depends on evidence which, however scanty and imperfect, admits of no enlargement or further corroboration. So it is with regard to the two ancient nations which, next to the chosen people of God, have left the deepest traces of their presence in the existing state of the world, and continue to exercise the most powerful influence on modern society. The longest period in the annals of each is shrouded in darkness, which is broken only at intervals by some faint gleams of light, not sufficient to afford a distinct view of the few objects on which they fall. And even in later ages a like bar is frequently opposed to our curiosity. We reconcile ourselves to this insurmountable limitation of our knowledge because, after all, that which we possess is sufficient for the most important purpose of our inquiries, as it enables us to understand the character and general progress of each people, and its place in the history of the world. If the same thing has occurred in the early history of the chosen race, have we any reason to be surprised, or any right to complain? It is true the particulars of this history are more interesting to us than those of any other, just as the geography of the Holy Land is more interesting to a

Christian pilgrim than that of Italy or Greece. But our wishes, however natural and reasonable, cannot prescribe or control the course of the Divine government; and we may be sure that whatever knowledge God's Providence has thought fit to withhold from us, cannot be necessary with regard to any of the higher interests of our being. If the process by which the Pentateuch was brought into its present state has not been revealed to us, but affords room for manifold conjecture and endless controversy, however we may wish it had been otherwise, our part is humbly to submit to the Divine will. We see that, in fact, all the information that has been vouchsafed to us as to the earlier period of the Sacred History is very scanty and fragmentary. A few pages, sometimes a few lines, are the only remaining record of the lapse of centuries. In the Pentateuch itself, as in other parts of the Old Testament, we meet with frequent reference to works, which would probably have shed much light on persons and events, now but dimly perceptible, and presenting an ambiguous aspect; but it was not the Divine pleasure that they should be preserved to us. But that which we have is not only sufficient, but more than sufficient, for the main end, the exhibition of the Divinely appointed preparation for the coming of Christ. Every line of this record is precious to us; but there is much as to which it seems to us that our view of the whole would have been no more affected by its absence, than it has been by the loss of those works to which the Sacred Writers refer for information which we can no longer find in them.

Another thought which may well be brought home to our minds by the controversies of the day, is that we have greater need than ever to distinguish between things which do and things which do not concern our Christian faith and hope. A great part of the events related in the Old Testament has no more apparent connexion with our religion than those of Greek or Roman history. It is true that even the minutest and seemingly most insignificant facts may have entered into the scheme of Divine Providence, as part of the process through which a way was prepared for the introduction of the Gospel. But this is no more than may be said of every thing that has happened every where upon earth from the beginning of the world. The adaptation of the means to the end is one of the secrets of the Divine counsels; and we cannot presume to say that the same end might not have been attained by some other means. This therefore is not sufficient to invest the means with any share in the sanctity of the end. The history, so far as it is a narrative of civil and political transactions, has no essential connexion with any religious truth, and, if it had been lost, though we should have been left in ignorance of much that we should have desired to know, our treasure of Christian doctrine would have remained whole and unimpaired. The numbers, migrations, wars, battles, conquests, and reverses of Israel, have nothing in common with the teaching of Christ, with the way of salvation, with the fruits of the Spirit. They belong to a totally different order of subjects. They are not

to be confounded with the spiritual revelation contained in the Old Testament, much less with that fulness of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. Whatever knowledge we may obtain of them, is in a religious point of view, a matter of absolute indifference to us; and if they were placed on a level with the saving truths of the Gospel, they would gain nothing in intrinsic dignity, but would only degrade that with which they are thus associated. Such an association may indeed exist in the minds of pious and even learned men; but it is only by means of an artificial chain of reasoning, which does not carry conviction to all beside. Such questions must be left to every one's private judgment and feeling, which have the fullest right to decide for each, but not to impose their decisions, as the dictate of an infallible authority, on the consciences of others. Any attempt to erect such facts into articles of faith, would be fraught with danger of irreparable evil to the Church, as well as with immediate hurt to numberless souls.

A single word more. That which now unhappily disquiets many will turn to your profit, if it should lead you to take a firmer hold on the centre of your faith and hope; to draw closer to Christ Himself, and to seek in a more intimate and practical communion with Him, that light and life, which He alone can impart. If the historical and critical questions which have lately been brought anew under discussion, were capable of a solution which should leave no room for doubt, it would not bring you one step the nearer, or

at all help you to find your way to Him. At the best it could yield only an intellectual satisfaction, perhaps at the risk of diverting your attention from that which is alone needful. But if you take your stand, and make good your footing, on that Rock which is the sole foundation that is laid for the Church, and therefore the only one on which any of us can find a sure resting-place, you will enjoy more than one great advantage in looking abroad on the field of controversy which is spread before you. One will be the sense of a happy security, not to be shaken by any fluctuations of public opinion, or any strife of doubtful disputations. And in proportion to the calmness of that assurance which you derive from your personal experience, will be your attainment of the still greater blessing of a meek, charitable, and peaceable spirit, which will guard you from harsh judgments and inward bitterness toward those from whom you may differ, while it leads you forward in the way of truth. And then—though your aim is not the knowledge which puffeth up, but the charity which edifieth—this shall be added unto you, that you will also see farther and more clearly than those who are standing and striving on the lower and debatable ground. It is not that you are to expect any supernatural illumination which will supply the place of patient study, and enable you to solve questions which have eluded the grasp of the most learned and sagacious inquirers. But you will gain something which is far better; a faculty of spiritual discernment, which will guide you safely where others, with perhaps superior

natural advantages and ampler opportunities of knowledge, may have gone astray. In the ripening of your inner life, and, above all, in the assiduous discharge of your pastoral duties, you will be constantly acquiring a deeper insight into the nature of the things which belong to your own peace, and to that of those who are committed to your care; and you will thus possess an unfailing test by which you may try the character, and measure the worth, of whatever is proposed for your assent; and, having learned more and more clearly to distinguish between that which rests on the sure Word of God, and that which floats on the shifting current of human speculation, you will so "prove all things" as to "hold fast that which is good."

NOTE ON PAGE 17.

Whether all but two or three readers have misunderstood the main drift of Professor Powell's Essay, is a question which does not much concern those, who, sharing the general opinion, expressed themselves in accordance with it, unless they themselves had felt a doubt on the subject; and, for my own part, I can say that none has ever for an instant crossed my mind. But it does very deeply concern the character of Professor Powell; and in my opinion no greater wrong could have been done to his memory, than the attempt to vindicate him from the charge of "denying miracles." Unless he meant to do that, he would have been guilty of an ambiguity of language, which, in one so capable of expressing himself clearly, could hardly be uniutentional, though its motive would be difficult to explain. What ground the Edinburgh Reviewer saw for the doubt which he intimates, p. 475, he has not stated. Mr. Maurice (Tracts for Priests and People, p. 13), though anxiously seeking for points in which he could agree with the writer, could not shut his eyes to so glaring a fact. "Mr. Baden Powell," he says, "was an English man of science. The miracles, regarded as departures from order, contradicted, in his judgment, the very idea of physical science; he could not reconcile them. He believed that no one could." Mr. Kennard alone, as far as I know, has ventured positively to assert that Professor Powell "does not deny miracles;" but he has fairly stated his ground for that assertion (p. 76). He first quotes some words of Professor Powell—"The question, then, of miracles stands quite apart from any consideration of *testimony;* the question would remain the same if we had the evidence of our own senses to an alleged miracle, that is, to an extraordinary or inexplicable fact. It is not the mere fact, but the *cause* or *explanation* of it, which is the point

at issue." On this Mr. Kennard remarks: "He does not, the reader will be careful to observe, 'deny miracles,' but, feeling the increasing difficulty which scientific and historical criticism places in the way of the old unreasoning reception of them as mere wonders, he seeks to explain and account for them consistently with the requirements of science, and the demands of an enlightened Christian faith."

What Professor Powell admitted, and what he denied, in this matter, is perfectly clear. He fully admitted that, among "alleged miracles," many have been real facts; what he denied was, that any of these facts were real miracles. He believed that they only appeared to be such to persons ignorant of the laws of nature. On the other hand, he never meant to deny that many alleged miracles, if they had taken place, would have been works of superhuman power; what he denied as to these was, that they were real facts. "An alleged miracle," he concludes, "can only be regarded in one of two ways:—either (1) abstractedly, as a physical event, and therefore to be investigated by reason and physical evidence, and referred to physical causes, possibly to *known* causes, but at all events to some higher cause or law, if at present unknown; it then ceases to be supernatural, yet still might be appealed to in support of religious truth, especially as referring to the state of knowledge and apprehensions of the parties addressed in past ages; or (2) as connected with religious doctrine, regarded in a sacred light, asserted on the authority of inspiration. In this case it ceases to be capable of investigation by reason, or to own its dominion; it is accepted on religious grounds, and can appeal only to the principle and influence of faith." In the Charge I have pointed out the fallacy of this alternative. Here I have only to observe that nothing can be plainer than the negative proposition. Unless the "alleged miracle" may be "referred to physical causes, known or unknown," and so "ceases to be supernatural," and to have a right to the name of miracle, it was not a "physical event," or real fact. According to Mr. Kennard's representation, Professor Powell would have admitted the reality of the facts related in the Gospels, which are commonly regarded as miraculous, and only denied that they were supernatural. Mr. Kennard would vindicate the Professor from the charge of excessive scepti-

cism, by convicting him of the most extravagant credulity; which, without raising his character as a divine, would have ruined his reputation, not only as a man of science, but of common sense. It would indeed be too much to affirm that a time may not come, when acts such as the most marvellous of those attributed to our Lord, shall have been brought within the ordinary operations of the human will, even acting directly, without the intervention of the bodily organs. But this hypothesis would not in the least affect the character of our Lord's miracles, unless it could be shown that, when they were wrought, the human will possessed such a direct power over outward nature. Probably no supposition could be more foreign to Professor Powell's habits of thought.

Mr. Wilson, in his *Speech before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council* (p. 47), gives an extract from Professor Babbage's *Ninth Bridgwater Treatise*, containing "a solution which," he says, "to a great extent, is satisfactory to many minds." It is headed, "*Argument from Laws intermitting on the Nature of Miracles.*" "The object," as the author states, "is to show that miracles are not deviations from the laws assigned by the Almighty for the government of matter and of mind; but that they are the exact fulfilment of much more extensive laws than those we suppose to exist." The argument is ingeniously illustrated by the analogy of the calculating engine. But there is an unfortunate ambiguity in the statement of the object, which might well withhold Mr. Wilson from "adopting it as an undoubted or complete solution of all questions connected with the subject of the miraculous." For it may mean either that all "alleged miracles" fulfil the conditions described, or that no events which do not fulfil those conditions are real miracles. The former would be a bold assumption, if the universe is to be considered as a "mechanism," like the calculating engine, and it is one not to be hastily ascribed to Professor Babbage. In the second sense the proposition seems to leave "the subject of the miraculous" just where it was. For all theologians would agree in referring miracles, no less than all other events, to the Divine Will. None would consider them as exceptions to the universality of the Divine foreknowledge, or as thoughts which had suddenly entered the Divine mind. But it would not follow that they should be

regarded as parts of a system of machinery, set in motion once for all, and working by a blind necessity.

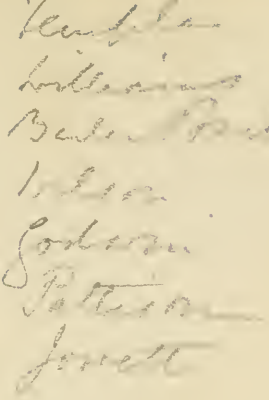
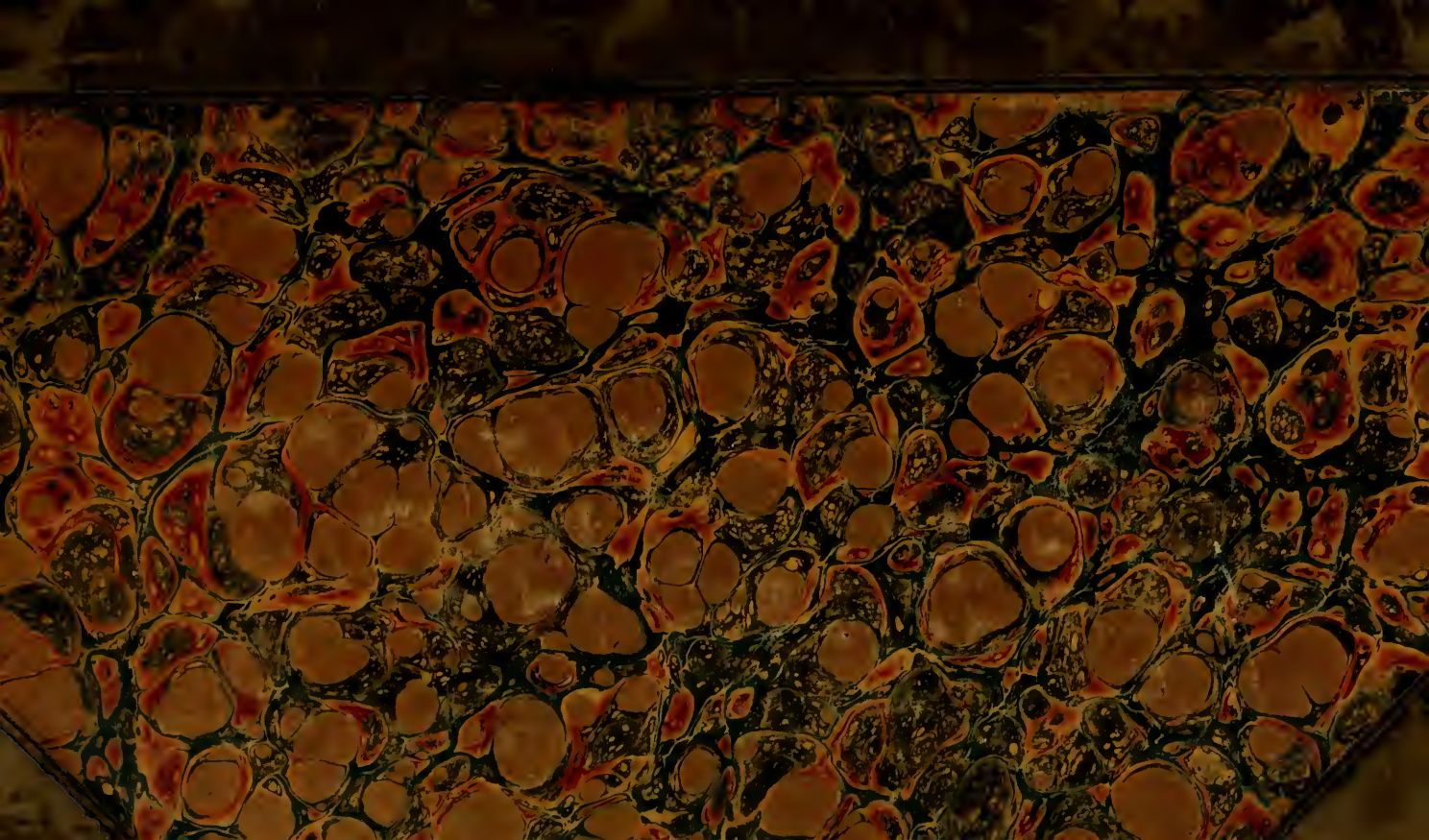
Much as there is that is both true and valuable in Mr. Llewelyn Davies's Essay on this subject (Tracts for Priests and People, *The Signs of the Kingdom of Heaven*), I fear that there are parts of it which are likely to leave a misleading impression on the minds of many readers. In his anxiety to correct the error of those who, as he thinks, lay undue stress on the element of power in our Lord's miracles, he reasons so as to suggest a grave doubt, whether whatever benefit resulted from them was not much more than counterbalanced by the apparent countenance which they gave, both at the time and in all succeeding ages, to what he calls "wonder," or "miracle worship." For, apart from the effect on the persons on whom the miracles were wrought, which cannot be properly taken into the account, the benefit, according to the author, consisted in the illustration of certain spiritual truths. That they were suited to that purpose none will deny. But those truths did not, as Mr. Davies would probably be the first to admit, absolutely need such illustration; and a mode of illustration which tended to divert attention from the thing illustrated, and to fix it on something quite foreign to our Lord's intention, might seem hardly worthy of His wisdom; and Mr. Davies acknowledges that such an effect was in general inevitable. He says very truly (p. 40), "It is difficult to imagine the mind upon which the element of power would not tell with some force." I cannot so fully assent to the exception which he subjoins: "but we are at liberty, I think, to assume that the cultivated mind might be impervious to such an argument." It is easy for a man of science at his desk to say: "Even if I was to witness any of the 'miracles' related in the New Testament, I would not believe that they were the effect of any superhuman power possessed by the person who appeared to perform them." When I know an instance of such incredulity, I shall believe it possible. At present I suspect that the sight would make a deeper impression on a cultivated, than on an uncultivated mind. But Mr. Davies seems to overlook the distinction between that part of our Lord's teaching which would have been equally true and impressive in the mouth of a merely human teacher, and that which

related to His own superhuman character. His ethical teaching could neither need nor admit of confirmation from miracles, as acts of power. But, as such, they were eminently fitted to gain credence for His declarations with regard to His own person in His relation to the Father. Indeed, for those who did not enjoy the privilege of His intimate society, or a special gift of the Holy Spirit, they might be absolutely indispensable, though not in all cases sufficient. The comparison (p. 41) with missionaries, who would, no less earnestly than the Apostles at Lystra, deprecate the being "taken for superhuman personages," seems to me to miss the point.

I cannot help thinking that the general tendency of the Essay is to depreciate the importance of the question as to the reality of our Lord's miracles. It is therefore the more satisfactory to observe, that Mr. Davies is aware that "they are so bound up with all else that is told us regarding Him, that the history must be torn in fragments, if we attempt to sever the signs and wonders from the other acts and discourses of Jesus" (p. 35), and that "an attempt to cut out from the Gospel narratives the 'supernatural element,' would make such havoc in them, that we should no longer know what to make of them, or how to trust them" (p. 37): that "we cannot shut our eyes to the fundamental nature of modern unbelief or doubt" (p. 30): that he does not share Mr. Kennard's mistake as to the purport of Professor Powell's Essay (p. 31), and sees that "the sanguine divines who wish to make the acquiescent philosophy (that which would dispense with 'the thought of God as really present in nature and society') compatible with something of the old religion, by keeping the actual course of things in one sphere, and 'faith' in another, will satisfy neither the cravings of the believing soul, nor the rational instincts of the philosopher" (p. 44).

The differences of opinion as to the proper significance of miracles, which exist among those who admit their reality, may be very wide and important: but they are quite insignificant in comparison with the gulf which separates Christian faith from the views of Jefferson, or Comte, or Strauss, or E. Renan. On whichever side the Church of England is to stand in future, it is at least desirable that her position should be clearly understood.

That she should have to contend against Deism and Pantheism, may be unavoidable; but she has reason to complain when attempts are made to palm either system upon her, as her genuine doctrine.

THE END.

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